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Where The Young Child Was

Marie Conway Oemler

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WHERE THE YOUNG CHILD WAS AND OTHER CHRISTMAS STORIES

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"Don't you remember that this is Christmas Eve?"

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WHERE THE YOUNG CHILD WAS

AND ALSO

THE SPIRIT OF THE HOUSE, THE YOUNGEST OFFICER, LINDEN GOES HOME, THE LITTLE BROWN HOUSE, THAT MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND

BY

MARIE CONWAY OEMLER

Author of "Slippy McGee," "A Woman Named Smith," "The Purple Heights," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

GEORGE AVISON

NEW YORK

THE CENTURY CO.

1921

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WITH BEST WISHES
FROM THE WRITER TO THE READER

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"WHERE THE YOUNG CHILD WAS" AND OTHER CHRISTMAS STORIES

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"WHERE THE YOUNG CHILD WAS"

"AIN'T some folks lucky?" Mahany spoke to Captain Austin Hoban, tramping up and down the desolate junction platform, and waved a huge mittened paw toward the private car glowing with warm light through the snowy dusk. "Look at them! Nothin' on earth to trouble 'em. *They* ain't jackrabbited from pillar to Post for heaven knows why," grumbled the grizzled old sergeant bitterly. "*They* ain't got to dry-nurse a lot of kid rookies that ought to be home hangin' up stockin's for their poppas an' mommas to fill on the sly, 'stead of bein' took out on a Christmas Eve for to be makin' soldiers of, which I misdoubt heaven ever meant the likes of such *for*."

He was taking an offensively raw and

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youthful draft out to a Northwest Post; Hoban, returning to that same Post after leave of absence, had fallen in with him at this transfer point. They were waiting with such patience as they possessed for the made-up train—engine, box-car, coach of foreign miners, extra car for the soldiers, and now this superfine private car, "Andrassah"—to start. Still grumbling, for it was piercingly cold, Mahany went back to his charges.

Two furry shapes came out of the private car. Hoban paused idly, and the arc-light shone full upon him. Whereupon one of the shapes, bounding upon the platform, hurled himself into the captain's arms.

"Hoban! What a bully surprise! What are you doing here—coming or going? Come over and see Sally; we're going to spend Christmas with Buckleigh at the Two Bar B," shouted Lieutenant Darrell Compton; and, laying forcible hands upon his old friend, he dragged him forward.

Hoban, who would have fled from such a

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meeting as from the wrath to come, found himself being presented to Buckleigh, who, for reasons of his own, most greatly desired to find favor in the eyes of Lieutenant Compton just then. A few questions, and he took the situation in hand; hardly knowing whether to shrug or to swear, Hoban found himself, despite protests, literally captured bag and baggage.

Five minutes later Buckleigh was presenting his chance guest to the other members of his party—Trenton, the Pittsburgh man, he who makes money ruthlessly and builds great hospitals; McLachlin, the New York magnate; Dr. Edgar Bristow, the specialist, and his wife, a woman as beautiful as an idol and, one suspected, costing quite as much to keep properly panoplied; and Sally Compton, for whom alone Hoban really had eyes and ears. She had been the toast of every post since she wore pigtails and a sunbonnet and raced around the compound on her own calico pony. It is a favorite army tradition

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that she winked at the doctor when she was one hour old; and that, ere she had reached the riper age of two years, the chaplain, the surgeon, two fat majors, and a bald-headed general had proposed to her. For Sally Compton is, of all heart-snatchers, the most alluringly, adorably, distractingly pretty.

Inwardly disturbed and raging, outwardly starry-eyed and sparkling, Sally gave him her hand coolly enough; but the irony of the situation was not lost upon her; the color deepened vividly in her cheeks. Fate, she thought wrathfully, was certainly playing her a scurvy trick!

Sally knew only too well that this trip in the gorgeous "Andrassah" to the Two Bar B Ranch, that most bepraised and advertised of all big money-making places, was really only the last of the calculated moves of Buckleigh's game: a game by which, mesh after mesh, his net had been closing upon her. Consummately had Buckleigh played it—with lavish attentions, motors, yacht, private

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car, great ranch, casual-deliberate hints betraying his ownership of this railroad, that mine, a bank or so; ever impressing upon the army girl's consciousness the sheer enormous power of money—his money. Even the guests here to-night were part of that scheme —millionaire, magnate, great specialist, famous beauty, all summoned before her by a wave of Buckleigh's magic hand.

Stout, baldish, suave, a hint of tigerishness underlying his slow smile and lurking in his heavy-lidded eyes, Buckleigh bargained for youth and beauty and charm. A man who left nothing to chance, she surmised that he had planned even to the last detail just when and where and how the final scene in this pleasant comedy should be staged; she meant to say "Yes."

And now, just when she was beginning to think she might school a rebellious heart into a sensible mind's acceptance of a thing so altogether desirable as this great match, here had fate thrust upon her the one man in all

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the world who made that decision taste of the bitterness of death; dragged him in whom of all men she wished not to see just then.

The car wheels presently began to grind out a diabolical rhythm: *"Buckleigh's buying Sally Compton! Buckleigh's buying Sally Compton!"*

Out of the corner of her eye she glanced at Hoban's handsome profile, bent toward Adele Bristow. No, she reflected drearily, he had never cared; that had been left for her. Darrell was lamenting that he must part from Hoban in the morning, when Buckleigh's car was to be picked up by the regular express at a station farther on. Buckleigh, too, was suavely sorry Captain Hoban could n't stop over at the ranch for Christmas: he had planned a few festivities, he added.

Glancing at the over-magnificence of his car, Hoban had a pretty accurate idea of what Buckleigh would make that Christmas at the Two Bar B. "He 'll jolly well cram

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the earth into a gilt-paper cornucopia and hand it over to Sally, with a sprig of holly and a fat smile," thought the soldier, who had n't anything but his name, his sword, and his heart to offer her. "She'll take it, of course. Who would n't? It 's too big a temptation for any mortal woman to withstand, I suppose." He knew that Buckleigh was "the millionaire Sally Compton 's dangling around these days," as a too-faithful friend had written. He wished that he could honestly find it in his heart to like the man; but he could n't.

Then the car wheels began to grind out a soothing tune for Hoban, too, car wheels being the most totally depraved of all inanimate objects when given half a chance to show what they can do: *"Sally 's going to marry Buckleigh! Sally 's going to marry Buckleigh!"*

And all the while the night lowered and lowered, and the storm outside gathered and gathered. All day it had been snowing—

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more heavily when they had left the junction and plunged into the Wyoming hills; now the storehouse of the snows opened doors and windows, and poured out its garnered hoards.

In the rattling day-coach a Slovak miner was singing an endless melancholy song, which rose and fell with the monotony of gray waves on a desert shore. In the other coach the soldiers amused themselves as best they might. But in the "Andrassah," having concluded a veritable triumph of a Christmas Eve dinner, they were somnolently content. Better the stalled ox than the dinner of herbs; if you doubt it, ask the ox.

"I remember," said McLachlin, stretching himself lazily, "somebody—seems to me it was Pliny, but I would n't swear to it—saying something about being able to enjoy a tempest on the sea more when one happened to be on land. I 've muddled it of course," he added good-humoredly; "but if you 'll look at that snow against those win-

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dows you 'll gather my meaning." For some time the train had been moving more and more slowly; now, with a long scrunching of brakes, it stopped.

A worried conductor appeared. "Stalled freight ahead. Snow. Wired for help. Have to wait a bit, gentlemen."

"How long?" A frown darkened on Buckleigh's forehead.

"Depends on how soon the plow gets here," said the conductor.

"Do you mean to say," exploded Buckleigh, "that *I 'm* to be held up indefinitely for a dashed freight?"

"We can wire for a plow and have the freight pulled out, Mr. Buckleigh," said the conductor, dryly; "but even *you* can't give orders to the Almighty to quit snowin' when He feels like snowin', and have your orders obeyed." He went out, grimly smiling.

"Quite so, Buckleigh, quite so!" said the Pittsburgh man, briskly. "Job, thirty-eight, verse twenty-two." He was a religious

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man, and outside of business hours greatly respected the power of Providence.

"I do not seem, at any rate." said Buckleigh, "to lack Job's comforters." One might have thought he snarled.

Sally Compton laughed in his face. "Why, I thought you were too wise," she mocked him gently, "to kick against the pricks of the inevitable, Mr. Buckleigh. Besides, we 're deliciously 'comfy,' and there 's no immediate danger of our starving or freezing, is there?"

She felt that she had been given a respite, and that the inevitable had been, at least for a little while, deferred. Her spirits rose soaringly. But Buckleigh was displeased. He hated to have his plans upset, and every detail of to-morrow had been prearranged, even as scenes in a well-set play. Now, as things were, he doubted if they reached the ranch before to-morrow night, even if then.

They were preparing to retire when the

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conductor came in hurriedly. "Say, ain't one of you gentlemen a doctor?"

"I am a physician," said Bristow, suddenly alert.

The conductor whispered into the doctor's car. Bristow started, whistled, scrambled into his fur coat, jammed his cap down over his eyes, and the two hurried out.

Ten minutes later Bristow was back. Big, commanding, forceful, to the finger-tips the able physician at work, he gave crisp orders. "Hot water," he directed Buckleigh; "gallons of hot water. Get busy, please. Blankets, and two or three pillows. Adele, I shall need you. There 's a girl out in that box-car—and her hour is upon her."

Adele stared. "Why, Edgar, you know very well I 'm without my maid; she *would* go home—just as we were starting, too. Horribly provoking, and I 'm what you might call helpless. If she were here you 'd be welcome to her services, of course."

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"I said I needed you," said Bristow, curtly.

"Edgar! Good heavens, you must be mad! In a box-car? A strange woman? No! I won't! I can't."

"You will. You can. You 've got to," said he. "You 'll be useful for once, whether you like it or not. I need you; and you 'll do what I say this night, or I 'll know why." He towered above her, eyes gleaming, jaws set; almost his streaked gray mane bristled. He looked magnificent; like, say, a thoroughly roused old lion.

His wife stared, and a most curious light flickered into her astonished eyes. She rose, gracefully ignoring the shocked and startled faces. "I 'll save you the trouble of taking me by the hair, Edgar," she said lightly. "You look quite capable of it. Just tell me what I 'm to do."

"Exactly what I tell you. Remember: If you scream I 'll box your ears, and if you faint I 'll chuck you neck and crop into the

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snow. Get your wraps. Where's my black case, you, Jim, or whatever your name is? A bundle of towels, Miss Compton, please. Buckleigh, look after that hot water. Captain Hoban, you and Mr. Compton get those fellows in the cars ahead quiet, and keep 'em quiet. That girl 's in a bad way."

Sally helped Mrs. Bristow on with cloak and hood. Porters, loaded with blankets and pillows, followed them. Hoban and Compton had already gone through the cars ahead and the shouts and singing had suddenly ceased.

Trenton, with a very sober face, came over and sat down by Sally. "Oh, my, my, my!" said he, nervously. "Poor thing, poor thing! Natural of course; but—in a box-car—dreadful, dreadful!"

"All by herself!" Sally added.

Trenton drew a little closer.

"It—sort of comes upon me—unaware," he whispered. "My wife died—like that.

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Very young, poor thing! I was too. Not rich then. Poor—very; but, my heaven, how happy! She was so pretty, my wife!" he added wistfully. "I loved her a great deal, Miss Compton. But—she died, and the baby with her. And that 's why," he finished mildly, "I—build hospitals."

The little, cold, dry, moneyed man took on a new aspect. The girl reached over impulsively and squeezed his bony hand, a swift, warm, reassuring human pressure. "To thank you," she whispered, "for the women and the children your hospitals have helped and saved, because of one sweet woman, Mr. Trenton."

"I—loved her," said he, simply. "And when all 's said and done, my dear, that 's the biggest, greatest, most glorious thing in the world!" A musing and remembering smile crept into his tired old eyes.

"From what I gathered from our sententious friend, the conductor," McLachlin was saying a little later, "the girl 's the wife of

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one of your foreign miners, Buckleigh, going out to the Big Bend. He had to come for a job, poor chap! and he could n't leave her behind; she has no people in this country at all. So the railroad men, seeing how things were with her, made her as comfortable as they could in the box-car—and dashed decent of them, too, say I! They thought she 'd be able to reach the mine safely. The thing worries me; upon my word it does! I can't help thinking of the night my daughter's little girl was born, and how I sat in the library and hung on to my wife like a scared kid. I got ten years older in that one night." He got up abruptly and began to tramp up and down, his hands under his coat tails. "I wish she were over it!" he muttered.

Buckleigh watched him with cold scorn. He was disgusted and furiously angry. It was bad enough, he considered, to be stalled here on the edge of nowhere, with all his prearranged plans going awry. But that an

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unknown and poverty-stricken woman should actually disrupt his party, render distracted his exclusive guests, making them forget their own exalted station, and behave as if they were of her common clay, struck him as savoring of stark anarchy. Bristow, whose fees were enormous, who was consulted by foreign royalty, had rushed out into the night like the veriest country doctor, dragging, too, his wife with him; Buckleigh hoped Adele would divorce him for it. Moreover, Bristow had, without so much as a by-your-leave, coolly confiscated especially woven blankets, down pillows, monogrammed linen, as if the woman's need had made them hers by simple right! He, Buckleigh himself, had been suddenly pushed aside as one of no consequence, merely because the most ordinary of human events was occurring to the most ordinary of human beings.

Porters, bearing buckets of boiling water swathed in blankets to preserve the heat,

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came and went. Sally Compton refused either to entertain or be entertained; she sat silent; at times a slight tremor passed over her; for Sally felt that the angels of life and death walked abroad almost visibly that night.

Later Hoban came in, his shoulders thickly powdered. "Bristow says she's doing as well as can be expected," he told them. "But—she's nothing but a slip of a girl, I understand. I was helping one of the porters up with a bucket of hot water—and I heard—" He shook his head.

McLachlin nodded sympathetically. "I know. I remember when—my girl—" He blew his nose violently.

Buckleigh grunted.

"My wife," said Trenton, wistfully, "was a slip of a girl, too, and—so pretty! Poor thing, poor thing!"

Buckleigh stared coldly.

Sally looked from one man to the other curiously. It struck her that, stripped of a

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sudden of convention, each appeared as he was, with a sort of elemental clarity and simplicity.

"You 've no idea," said Hoban, "the effect on those foreigners in the front car. One of the Italians that can speak a little English told me it was 'like the Holy Night.' Do you know what those chaps are doing? They 're praying!"

McLachlin nodded; Trenton smiled understandingly; Buckleigh sneered.

Hoban's face twisted oddly; he grinned and his eyes twinkled. "And the sergeant," he said, "has sent every man jack of his boys to bed without undressing, and is sitting there with a pistol in each hand to make sure they keep quiet."

The hours crawled. An immense and waiting silence hung, it seemed to Sally, over the whole snow-wrapped universe, knowing that something very wonderful was about to occur. Buckleigh alone sat cold, impassive, unmoved; so far as she could see he had not

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shown one slightest touch of human sympathy. She watched him stealthily, with a growing fear. She meant to marry Buckleigh of course; and one could n't expect everything; but—

Released, at Hoban's request, from the sergeant's too-strict surveillance, the soldiers had cleared a space under the trees outside and, utilizing what they could find of dead timber, had built a fire, which sputtered and hissed as the snow from the branches above melted and ran down into it. Weirdly the flames lit up the towering hillsides, the trees bent under their weight of snow, the half-buried trains and the little frozen river beside which the track ran.

Sally, gazing out at the window, could distinguish Darrell, and then Hoban's taller figure. The very sight of Hoban gave her an odd sensation of strength and comfort.

A cold gray light was beginning to grow when Bristow appeared in the box-car door, collarless and with bared arms. He put up

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a great forearm and rubbed it across his forehead. "As fine a little rascal," said he, "as I 've ever seen."

"Boy?" asked Hoban.

"Sure. Ten pounds. Lungs like a blacksmith's bellows; ribs like a dray, and a fist like a prizefighter's! Some boy, believe me!" He sighed with relief. "I had to haul his fool father away by the scruff or he 'd be crying over the girl's feet yet. What!" he said, abruptly, to the pale, boyish husband who approached him supplicatingly, "are you here again? No, you can*not* come blubbering over that girl just now! She 's all right, I tell you, but I can't have you disturbing her. Go away! Well, you can come back in half an hour, then. Take him away, somebody." He looked after the handsome fellow, whom the sergeant dutifully led away as one under tentative arrest, and his eyes twinkled; but his smile was kind.

Later Sally begged, and was allowed, to

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visit the new arrival. In a cleared space at one end of the car, lighted by an oil lamp and warmed by a bucket brazier, on a cot covered with straw which showed under the blankets and pillows, lay a Madonna-like Italian girl. Her beautiful black hair, meekly parted on a pale brow, fell in two long braids over her shoulders. She was pearly white, and her childish mouth sagged somewhat. But out of the pale and weary face shone a pair of eyes so sweet, so pure, so starlike, that Sally's heart gave an upward bound at sight of them.

The girl made a little, fluttering, welcoming motion of the hands, smiling ever so faintly. They looked at each other steadily, the girl who was going to marry Buckleigh, and the girl who was the wife of one of Buckleigh's miners. The sweet, shining eyes were telling Sally something—that same something Trenton had told her while they waited: that love is, after all, the greatest thing in the world. The girl turned her

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head and spoke in a soft whisper. "She wants you to hold the baby," said Adele Bristow.

Mrs. Bristow's Parisian gown, which she had n't had time to change, was rumpled, and her magnificent red hair hung heavily down. There were dark circles under her eyes, and she, too, was very pale. But, as one who holds a hard-won treasure, she clasped the newly born against the laces at her breast, smiling upon the downy black head. Even as she smiled the baby nuzzled and whimpered. Bristow, over her shoulder, laughed.

His wife, thrusting the baby hurriedly into Sally's arms, turned upon him like one at bay. A fiery color leaped into her cheeks, then faded, leaving her paler than before. "Oh! You—you big, blind, blundering brute!" she gasped. And she began to weep uncontrollably.

Sally thrust the baby into his mother's

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waiting arms and stared at the scene before her.

Adele had sunk to the floor, but Bristow, despite her struggles, had lifted her and was holding her in his mighty grip. "There, there, honey!" He tried to soothe her. "I guess I was pretty awful to you at first, was n't I? But you stood by me like a brick, Adele, and I 'm proud of you. You 'll get your new limousine for last night's work, my girl. I tell you, I 'm proud of you; you can be a real woman—when you like."

"If you had ever really loved me," she said stormily, "you 'd know I always wanted to be real."

He looked down at her, his brows wrinkling in pained astonishment. "Ever really loved you? Woman, I 'm crazy over you!" he said fiercely. "Have n't I shown it plainly enough? Love you? Adele, I have loved you so greatly that I have n't even

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asked or expected you to love me in return."

"But that's just the trouble!" she wailed. "For I do! You think I care only for other things; and I have let you think so. But when the child—turned to me—like that—and you—and you—oh, Edgar, Edgar!"

"I am twenty years older than you," he reminded her. "I look like a bear and—act like one sometimes, I 'm afraid, Adele."

His voice was so humble that Adele laughed and cried together. "All that," she agreed, "is quite true. Those are some of the reasons why I—why I—fell in love with you; why I 'm—why I 'm—still in love with you—Edgar—" for at that the big man had swung her clear off her feet. "N-no, I don't think you're a bit too rough.—All right, you can buy me another frock if you want to.—N-no, it's not; your beard's perfectly beautiful, Edgar!"

The door slid open noiselessly and a black curly head looked in. Seeing the coast clear, a lithe body followed; then the boyish hus-

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band was on his knees beside the cot. Such a look as passed between the two young creatures over their baby's fuzzy poll!

Sally's eyes stung with sudden uncontrollable tears. Love was, indeed, the greatest thing in the world, only—she had n't got it. She was to have, instead, all that the terrible power of money can summon up for such as have the key of gold—splendid things, perfectly palpable things, such as one can put one's hands on. As if she had weighed and tasted them, and found them wanting—dust and ashes—her living spirit rose up within her at that moment and rejected them, crying aloud for its larger and diviner heritage. She knew that Buckleigh had no part in that heritage; the thought of him affected her like a nightmare; sheer panic terror came upon her.

"No! I can't! I can't! Not for the whole world!" she thought. "Oh, what 's happening to me, what 's the matter with me? I 'm—I 'm being pushed outside of

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everything. I can't take the money—and I can't get the love!"

For the first time in her pleasant life there had come to her a moment wherein the spirit experienced its aloneness in the universe—saw all the petty barriers it had built against that solitude crumble, because they had not been fashioned of the one imperishable stuff.

Bristow and his wife had forgotten her presence, forgotten everything save that they had found each other. The young Italian had eyes only for his own; the little mother thought only of the sweet miracle which exalted her above the earth. No, there was no place here for Sally. She crept away.

The thought of meeting Buckleigh's eyes just then was unbearable. She could n't go back to the car. Everybody seemed to have retired. It was very still. Down the track she could see the flare of the deserted fire, and to this she made her way, grateful for the warmth and solitude.

Over in the east the cold, gray light grew

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slowly. Indescribable desolation weighed upon her. Oh, where was that Sally Compton who had found life so pleasant such a little while ago, a girl whom every one had seemed to care for? Gone, and all her gay careless surface brightness gone with her! She huddled down on a log dragged into the radius of the fire, pulled her furs farther up about her face, and wept heartbrokenly.

"Sally Compton!" exclaimed a horrified voice. "What are you doing out here? Trying to freeze? Who 's looking after you anyhow?" Hoban glared at her indignantly.

"Nin-nobody," gulped Sally, summoning her pride to her rescue and trying not to sniff too audibly. "I 'm qui-quite capable of ta-taking care of myself, thank you!"

"You look like it!" said he scornfully. "Darrell 's just turned in—thought you were in bed of course. Where 's Buckleigh? Why is n't *he* looking after you, I 'd like to

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know?" Jealousy lent his pleasant voice an acrid note new to it.

Sally looked up at him listlessly. "If you're going to be disagreeable," she suggested, "you can go away."

Hoban hesitated. "Look here!" said he painfully, "I'd like you to understand that my being here is n't exactly my own fault. Darrell did n't know you'd be annoyed—and I could n't tell him, could I? And then again, I could n't very well refuse to come without appearing churlish and running the risk of hurting his feelings."

"No," agreed Sally lifelessly, "I don't suppose you could."

"Sally," said he, flushing, "you have never given me a chance to ask you why you seemed to suddenly dislike me—after we'd been—well, say, friends. But I've wondered at times if you might have thought I was chump enough to think you cared for me, when you did n't. I never blamed you for not caring; how could I? But what hurt was that you

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"What are you doing out here? Trying to freeze?"

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should use such methods to prove it to me. I do not believe you ever acted like that to any human being save only myself; why? For I am sure that a sincere and honest affection, such as mine has always been for you, could never be considered an insult. Yet you seemed to think so." He looked at her steadily, and there was that in his fine face which carried conviction of truth. "I did believe for a time that you might care. I hoped it with all my heart, because I cared so much myself. I do not think that belief and that hope dishonored either you or myself," he ended with simple and manly dignity.

Something of her dumb and stricken misery came to him. His eyes grew troubled. He drew a little nearer.

"Sally," said he earnestly, "my love for you gives me the right to say what I 'm going to say: If you are n't quite sure of the step before you, hold back. Don't imperil your happiness. I don't say this because I have any hope for myself, for I have n't. But

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because I want more than anything on earth to see you happy. And you needn't be sorry for me, when you come to think of it, Sally. I 'm proud of loving you. I shall be the better man for it."

Sally sat bolt upright. His words went whirling through her head. Because of idle rumors to which her own jealous fancy lent weight, she had let him go. She had misjudged and misunderstood. He a flirt with a waiting list! He vain and light! He sure that every girl he chose to beckon to would come at his nod! Terrified that she might be only one of many, she had indeed spared no pains to make him understand she wished none of him; that had been the only solace to a smarting pride, a wounded love. Hurt and indignant, he had gone. . . . And then Buckleigh had come. She remembered Buckleigh's cold, hard face, his eyes of granite, when all others had been touched to a tender and human emotion.

Far, far away, from over the intervening

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hills, came a long faint screech. The relief was coming. In a few hours, parting company at the station farther on, Buckleigh's car would be flying farther and farther from Hoban, and nearer and inevitably nearer to the Two Bar B ranch and those Christmas festivities so cleverly arranged for her benefit. The two stared at each other.

"I hate to go away, never expecting to see you again, and not part friends, Sally. It 's just a little hard on me, is n't it? Won't you be friends at least?" pleaded the soldier.

Then Sally Compton spoke: "What I most wonder at," said she severely, "is the vast, immeasurable, terrifying, monumental stupidity of men!"

Hoban stared, as well as he might.

"The sheer, unbelievable, incredible stupidity," Sally repeated firmly, "of men. They just take things for granted—and they go away—and leave things like that—and they have n't even sense enough to come back and find out if there is n't some mistake—on

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their own part of course. Under such circumstances and in the face of such stupidity," she demanded tragically, "what is a poor, bewildered girl to do?"

"Huh! I should n't waste my good sympathy," said Hoban dryly, "on the poor, bewildered girl, if I were you. The poor, bewildered girl, as you call her—" he fixed her with a stern, accusing eye—"usually sends the man to Coventry—she and heaven alone know why; and when she's got him there safe and fast, why, she—marries a millionaire! Sensible, is n't she?"

"Oh! Does she though? *Only* when she 's perfectly sure and certain that the right man—I mean the other man—went to Coventry on his own hook, Captain Austin Hoban, and stays there because he chooses to stay there. Because he never cared. Sensible, was n't he?"

"A fat lot she knows about it," said he derisively, "if *that 's* all she knows! I hate to

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think any girl could be so downright dyed-in-the-wool silly."

"Do you?" said she tartly. "Well, she 's dyed-in-the-wool silly—to match him, if you like!" Her temper was rising.

"Oh, what 's the difference, if only they 're happy fools together?" said he wearily. "Sally," his eyes pleaded for him, "I have n't the ghost of a right to ask you, of course, but—are you really going to marry that fellow Buckleigh?" He could n't keep some of his pain from creeping into his voice.

"You have no right in this world to ask me, of course," she said with asperity; "but, as you have asked me, why—I don't mind telling you that I have n't been asked—yet."

He considered that soothing "yet." "Are you going to marry him?" he demanded bluntly.

Sally's temper flared. "I wonder," said she spiritedly, "how you'd like a little gentle cross-examination yourself? Let 's see: Are

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you going to marry Colonel Arkwright's daughter, Captain Hoban, or are you only flirting? Are n't you generally—flirting? People have told me so. And you did flirt with me, you know!"

"Whoever told you that," said he hotly, "told you a thumping lie! And I was not flirting with you! You 've had experience enough, I should think, to be able to tell the false from the real. But that's neither here nor there. You have n't answered my question: Are you going to marry Buckleigh?"

"I told you he had n't asked me."

"Are you going to marry Buckleigh?"

"How can I unless—"

"Are you going to marry Buckleigh?" inexorably.

"Well, then, *no*, if you will know!"

"Are you sure?"

"*Yes!* There!" furiously.

"Well, then, are you going to marry me?"

"Why," said she, scandalized, "you have n't asked me."

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"If I do ask you, will you?"

"But you *have n't* asked me!"

"Well, I do now," said he with vast patience. "Sally, I have always loved you; I shall always love you. I thought once—and now something bids me hope again—that you might care for me. Sally, if that hope is true, will you marry me?"

"This," murmured Sally wickedly, "is so sudden!" She glanced up at him ensnaringly. "You must give me time to—"

"—waste on some other old bald-headed duffer of a millionaire while I'm on tenterhooks?" said he grimly. "Nothing doing! Guess again!"

"I reckon," said Sally meditatively, "that I 'd better guess of course, had n't I?"

"You mean you will?" His tone was incredulous.

"I mean," said Sally bravely, "that I 'd never, never be happy in this world, or maybe in the next one either—if I could n't!" And then: "Austin! For

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heaven's sake, Austin! Somebody 'll see!"

"Let 'em!"

"Austin," said she, against his cheek—"Austin, you must n't think too much of me, really. I did believe all sorts of things against you; I did behave abominably to you; I did intend to—to take what Mr. Buckleigh offered. I thought you did n't care and that I might as well take all I could get—for myself. But—I heard Adele Bristow—say some things to the doctor a while ago, and I saw that dear little Italian girl looking at her husband over the baby's head, and—I knew right then I could n't. No, I just could n't. You understand?"

He held her closer. "We 'll have a Christmas party for that blessed baby after a while, but just at present you 're going to be sent to bed." Then he bundled her up and carried her back to the car; and in the shadow of the platform he kissed her again.

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The porter, knocking at her door, awoke her some hours later. She found everybody finishing a very late breakfast. A subdued joyousness radiated from every face except Buckleigh's.

"Everybody visits the Christmas baby!" said the doctor, buttoning his greatcoat. "My wife's already christened him 'Noel,' and his mother's made it 'Noello.' And, say, every man jack on the trains has chipped in on his Christmas present. You three wise men from the east United States want to chip in too?"

Buckleigh wrote a check perfunctorily. "To be saved up against the time they'll be striking in the mine," said he cynically.

"The hair of the dog," Bristow minded him, "is good for the bite. You other Magi in on this?"

They were—so boyishly, so wholeheartedly that Sally's heart was lifted. After all, she reflected happily, it's a good place, this world, and people, when they for-

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get things and remember they're all just folks together, come near being what God wants them to be.

"I owe that baby a good-sized bill, myself," said the doctor, smiling at his wife, who smiled back and slipped her hand in the crook of his big arm.

Miners, soldiers, railroad men, fell into line behind the doctor and his party. They massed around the sliding-doors, which the doctor pushed aside.

And when they were come . . . they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

One saw in the lamplighted interior, as in a cave's mouth, outlined by the glittering whiteness without, the straw-covered cot; beside it a handsome, foreign, shepherd-looking man; on it a pale, pretty girl, holding to her bosom a baby. At sight of all those eyes she flinched a little, but, seeing them all so good

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and friendly and reverent, she smiled, Madonna-wise, and spoke to her man.

Awkwardly, but with tender carefulness, he lifted the rosy child. "Noel!" said the Italian softly, and held him high for all to see.

"Noel! Noel! Noel!" echoed the men outside, uncovered in the snow.

Bristow, blinking suspiciously, gave the Christmas offering, to which all had contributed; and the little mother, with sweet wisdom, took again her baby and laid his small hand upon the gift; then she held up the wee fist, and the tiny fingers of a sudden outspread wide; one might think they blessed. At that, in spite of the doctor, they cheered him heartily.

Pushed forward by his mates, an Italian with a sweet and ringing barytone began to sing for him the old, old, lovely Christmas hymn:

> "*Adeste, Fideles,*
> *Laeti, triumphantes!*
> *Venite, venite,* in Bethlehem!"

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Adele crept closer to the big doctor's side, to be encircled in his arm. McLachlin, beaming, patted a soldier on the shoulder brotherly. The Pittsburgh millionaire, with uplifted head, smiled dreamily, being for a happy moment back again with the little lost wife of his youth. And Sally Compton, her eyes full of exquisitely happy tears, put her hand openly into Hoban's, careless of who saw. How had she ever, ever thought she could so trust it to any other?

"You see?" she whispered, looking up at him adoringly.

"I see," he whispered back, and closed his hand upon her fingers loverlike.

Up and up and up, cleaving the dark skies, soaring, like the lark at heaven's gate:

Gloria! Gloria! In excelsis Deo!
Venite, adoremus! Venite, adoremus! Venite, adoremus,
Dominum!

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THE SPIRIT OF THE HOUSE

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THE SPIRIT OF THE HOUSE

TRESCOTT had planned a Christmas in Munich, an Easter in Rome. The war changed that. Europe gone back to barbarism filled him with a horror bordering upon physical nausea; he felt that he never wanted to see Europe again.

He decided, instead, to go South. The Trescotts sprang from Carolina stock, and there were certain old records, family traditions, which he had long desired to trace to their fountainhead.

Famous at thirty-five, Trescott had yet remained a curiously aloof and rather austere figure. Some far-off Irish foremother had lent his dark face its delicate imprint of expectancy and dowered him with that strain which gave to all his work, along with a

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dewy and delightful freshness, a flavor of rose-scented and unforgotten yesterdays.

To this undercurrent of melancholy the Carolina landscape powerfully appealed. This land of lonesome wide marsh margins, of dim desolate forsaken fields, of broodings and moss-hung woods, appeared to him as might a half-hidden face which has haunted one's dreams. He wandered over the coast country with an ever increasing delight.

The day before Christmas caught him upon one of these solitary and endless tramps, glad enough to escape what he considered wearisome festivities. It was past noon when he reached his destination—one of those deserted old Carolina churches in whose grass-grown yards the proudly named dead sleep forgotten. In a far corner he had paused before a name which struck his keen eye pleasantly—*Lydia King.* For this, he realized at once, was the very name the girl in his next book must bear!

Even while he pictured what she should

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be, brown-haired, brown-eyed, slim and gracious, the creative power came upon him. Furiously, working at frenzied pressure, he got such as he could into his note-book, dreading to lose the thread and praying for the failing light to hold.

The still gray afternoon rushed suddenly into dusk, as happens in that land of little twilight, and with the dusk began a disconsolate drizzle. Before him stretched strange roads, bordered by abandoned rice-fields, eerily empty in the deepening dark. Where two weedy by-paths crossed he stopped perforce; and as he hesitated, a little faint light twinkled at the far end of the expanse upon his right.

Trescott sighed with relief; in Carolina one has only to stop at the first house, generally, to be sure of a shelter for the night. For what seemed an interminable distance the little byway led him, to stop abruptly at a pair of iron gates, wide open between tall brick pillars. A thick belt of cedars,

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swaying somberly in a rising wind, lay between him and the great black bulk of the house beyond. Like the garden gate, the house door stood open. The light which had led him came from a room to the right of an enormous hall.

His hand was upon the iron knocker when a girl came out of the lighted room, her trailing dress undulating about her slim body. As she neared him her face grew out of the dark, oval-shaped, cream-colored as a magnolia. With a gracious and welcoming gesture she beckoned him inside.

The great room, lighted only by unshaded wax candles in tall silver sticks upon the high mantel, had the shadow as of a Rembrandt, suggestive of rich depths. Out of it flickered the red glow of copper, the brighter gleam of brass, a hint of the deep blue of old Delft; outlines of old portraits appeared on the paneled walls; one divined the satiny sheen, the majestic mahogany of old carved furniture.

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Ruefully aware of his muddy shoes, his stained garments, so out of keeping with this stately orderliness, he wished to explain, to apologize, and looked up to meet glance to glance her intense and luminous regard. All in brown she was, save for a lace-edged scarf, and a white flower at her throat. The deep wilful dimple which marked her chin matched her child's mouth, rosy, arch, and virginal; but in the shining eyes under the fine brow one glimpsed the spirit, proud, flame-pure, indomitable.

She leaned toward him: "It took you such a long, long time to come!" she sighed, and her clear eyes reproached him. Bewildered, stung with a swift inexplicable pain, yet conscious of a mounting exaltation, sweet and heady, he stammered:

"But I didn't know you were here! Don't you see? I couldn't know?"

"Ah, but you did!" she insisted, with soft triumph. "That is why you are here! I remembered—and you saw the light!"

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With a slim finger against her lip, she looked up at him with smiling and mischievous eyes.

Gesture and glance stirred Trescott curiously; his mind went groping after remembrance of both. Then, as in a lightning flash, he knew. She who was the true spirit of all his effort, that Somebody who had so long eluded him, was face to face with him at last! He knew, and, meeting her steady and waiting glance he realized, with a great upward surge of heart, that she also knew.

Full of a joyous wonder, he stammered:

"It is you! Why—why—it is you!" Then panic seized him and he trembled:

"And I might have missed that light!" he gasped. "Why—I saw it by the merest accident!"

She shook her head. "No, you could n't. Don't you remember, Anthony, that this is Christmas Eve? Beautiful things happen at Christmas-time, Anthony!"

Uplifted above wonder, that she should know and call him by name did not in the

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very least surprise him; beautiful things, of course, have to happen at Christmas time!

"I knew," said he, rapt and elate, "that you simply had to be somewhere, Heart's Delight! I knew that when my great hour struck, I should find you. And oh, I have found you! I have found you!"

"The wonder of it!" Her voice was flute-like. "Oh, the great, beautiful wonder of it, Anthony! How was it I ever, ever doubted? I shall never, never doubt again!"

"I am not dreaming," whispered Trescott, pale with emotion. "No, nothing else ever has been, ever could be real for me save this, that you are you. I have been looking for you, I have been loving you, all my life. For you know, of course, that I must love you?"

"I knew it this long time since—while poor you went a-hunting it," said she, airily. "But say it again, Anthony; say, 'Lydia, I love you!' "

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He laughed whole-heartedly. "You Christmas miracle! What need to tell you, when you know?" said he, fervently. Lydia, Lydia, indeed I love you!"

"If I had even for one moment doubted that," she said gravely, "I should not be listening to you to-night; perhaps you might not know yourself!" Her eyes, shadowed, grew very old and wise. "But there have been times when I—despaired, Anthony. Oh, the days, the nights, the slow, slow empty years! And poor I so alone!" An immense weariness enveloped her, sitting grotesquely upon her young sweetness. She shivered; before his eyes her face grew pinched and sharp, and upon the smooth brow came a pucker of pain. She drew away; and in an instant an impassable barrier, delicate as moonlight, strong as adamant, seemed to arise between them. He had the prescience as of a thing inevitable.

"Anthony!" said she, "I—I can't explain even to myself just how I am here to-night,

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no, nor how you came to me. But I do know it had to happen. You will not forget?"

"How in God's name could I?" he wondered. "Nor is there need of explanation. Why, we love each other! How could I forget what I've been trying to remember ever since I was born?"

"You will remember—always, Anthony? Oh, my dearest dear, be sure!"

"I am sure."

"Then—never doubt—about to-night, Anthony—and me," she said.

Shaken out of himself, he got to his feet and held out his arms.

"Who talks of doubt and of forgetting?" he cried. "We two *belong*. Ah, don't you see how great my need of you is? I want you, I love you! Lydia, come; come now!" His outstretched arms pleaded for him.

"Do not touch me!" her gesture was almost repellent.

"Lydia!"

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"I—I cannot!" she gasped again. Her voice trailed into a sobbing whisper. "I remember—I had to find you—and that you had to come. But beyond that—I never thought."

"Well, think beyond that now, my child," he insisted, conquering his pained amazement. He added, with a gleam of playfulness, "Finding's keeping, Lydia."

"Finding's keeping—when one makes it so," she said, still out of his reach. "But now that you have found me, you must go. I cannot stay longer. See, the rain has ceased, the moon is out."

"Now? I am to leave you here—alone?"

"You are to leave me here—alone."

"There is no word for me, no—no surety? What am I to think?"

"You must come," she said, "here to King House, to-morrow, and take what you find. See, where I put my finger in the heart of this middle rose in the wreath just over the mantel? Come to-morrow and touch that

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spot, Anthony, and take my gift. And—stand so, for one last minute, Anthony, so that I may see your eyes and your lips and your black hair. Then tell me good night and good-by."

With a noble patience, without further question, he obeyed. In his heart he knew he should never lose her: and was he not coming back, to-morrow, for a gift from her?

Outside, in the wan light of a watery moon, the gaunt house among the black cedars showed with tragic bleakness. The girl stood a slim glimmering shape, in the dark doorway.

"Good-by!" she whispered, and it seemed to him he felt her touch him once, lightly, before the darkness swallowed her. When he reached the gate the light flickered out.

But unshaken and serene, as if he trod upon air, he walked through the withered wet grasses, his forehead bare to the salt wind. The night deepened; wider and

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wider grew the clear spaces in the sky, and light upon shining light the cohorts of the stars swung into their ordered and eternal places. Over in the east one glowed with a softer, larger luster. Trescott smiled up at it.

"I know you now!" he said, "you 're the Star of Beautiful Things that happen at Christmas!"

It had been to him rather a fable, hitherto, that old story of the star; but to-night something of its hidden, tender meaning was clear to him: along with the shepherds who had seen it shining upon Judean fields, along with the Wise Men who had sought it, bearing in their hands gifts of gold and myrrh and frankincense, the writer of books felt himself following it, and knew himself nearer the Everlasting; for that had come to him which made him understand, that which alone is real, and permanent, and abiding, beyond doubt, above fear, stronger than death: Love.

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Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death. . . . Many waters cannot quench love· neither can the floods drown it. . . .

Oh, surely when the morning stars sing together it is thus they sing before His face!

Odorous of wet woods, dappled with sunlight, the Christmas morning broke, and Trescott, looking out at his window, saw a new heaven and a new earth. An earth, too, which held a Christmas gift from her! So he went forth to claim it.

The gate was still open; rusting upon broken hinges it hung upon the ruined wall. He pushed his way through withered fennel, waist-high grasses, thorny smilax, till King House lay before him. With the tides of his blood freezing about his heart, Trescott opened the door and tremblingly made his way to the mantel and groped for the carved rose upon which—no, he had seen it with his eyes, he had not dreamed it—a girl's slim fingers had pressed.

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In the heart of the rose a tiny knob moved, a little panel slid back and within the small recess thus revealed lay a package in a velvet case whose moldering string broke at his touch.

He found himself, presently, leaning weakly against one of the great porch pillars. He was trembling violently; his mind whirled drunkenly; but mechanically he clutched his Christmas present. When he could command his senses again, he examined his gift—a small leather-covered book, upon whose yellowed pages appeared delicate and tendrillar writing. In the Christmas sunlight he sat down to read it.

18th Decembr., 1775—You being a Birthday Present, and I eighteen this day, and so much of joyous Import crowding upon me, I do make you my most sweet Intimate secret, little Book; and what I may tell none else I shall set down within you. Haply some day I shall show you to *Him*, saying, "Such and such you did and said, Sir, on such and such a Day, when we two were young and first you knew you loved me! See, herein I did

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set the record for you that be nearer to me than mine own heart's beating is!"

These be grievous & troublous Times, like as, my Grandfather saith, were prophesied of old by Jeremy the Jew. In despite of which I cannot but be happy, for that *Anthony loves me!* O God, how good Thou art, that lettest Anthony love me!

Yestreen I met with him in the green lane behind our House. I wore my brown stuff, for I bethought me he had said he ever liked russet upon a white-skinned maid. And the heels of my new silken shoon are red, and I thanked God I had had patience to crisp my hair.

He was wondrous smart, in claret colour, being indeed but newly returned from London. God never made a likelier man, nor one so proper shaped. When in Holy Writ I read how that Jesse's lad was ruddy and of a beautiful countenance, how that Saul was comelier and by the head and shoulders above all Israel, then thought I, these be like Anthony!

He dismounted and walk'd beside me, leading of his horse; and before we turned out of the lane he had told me. Now what he said is printed upon my heart. Nor could I set it elsewhere, not even to your pages, little Book. I greatly Wish'd but Fear'd to say that ever had I lov'd him, yea, even when I was but a child in pinafores. That will keep.

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Beside our Gate he kiss'd me, and this will I remember even when I am old to heaven. Never shall I forget, not even if I be grown familiar with the glory before the face of our God.

24th Decmbr.—Christmas Eve, and we Crowd'd to the Rafters, & much merrymaking. Anthony supp'd with us, and afterward drew my dear Father aside and spoke with him of me. My Father cry'd 'twas but yesterday I was a child a-learning of her horn-book at his knee; we might be betroth'd; but must e'en bide a while before wedding, for that the times are evil and War upon us. Then gather'd all the company about us & much kissing of me, and teasing, but my dear mother weeping.

The men talk ever of War & how the land must be swept with a besom ere ever Freedom come. But I bethink me how God is above all War; and that Anthony loves me!

5th Jany., 1776—To Aunt Chatty's to sup. No tea, but elegant plumb-cake. I greatly fear Eliza is a *Jealous Thing*, for she sniff'd most odious and catty & hop'd my fine gentleman, fresh from Lunnon, trifl'd not "with thy young affections, child." I recall now that never did I love Eliza. An her husband—though I much doubt she comes by one—ever beats her soundly, I shall die

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in the firm faith she deserved it. Back in the tilbury with Anthony. Sure 'tis a beautiful world, in spite of some Elizas in it.

3rd Febry.—He is gone, he & my Father. War has taken them. I saw him ride away from me and all my hope go with him; sure my soul itself did follow him a-whimpering. He waved his hat for a last farewell, and the sunlight was upon his beautiful countenance and his black hair.

I wish my father had allowed us to wed. O God, I am afraid! I am afraid!

1st March, 1777—No word this many, many weeks.

O God, remember me because of these nights! Weigh me in the balance with these black hours and see if all the errours of a thousand years could weigh equal with this, my misery!

17th Octbr.—They have fallen. Both together. Marion hath sent a letter full of kind words and praise. To my poor mother came my lov'd and honour'd father's last words, but for me only mine own little likeness taken from Anthony's breast. I know not if he had time to send one last thought to meward.

It has rain'd and rain'd and rain'd. And ever before me I see him lying and the cold rain drenching his hair.

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Oh, what is left to me, what? My gentle Mother shames me with her meek patience: *she* saw her children cradled in my father's arms. But I—what of me?

Midsummer, 1780—They ever bid me remember, Anthony, that I am still young and that many find me fair. They tell me 'tis not seemly for Youth to cherish Grief so fondly, that I must e'en look up and see in other eyes what once I saw in yours. They know me not, O my love!

Mayday, 1782—To-day have I sat up for the first time, after my long, long illness. Black Matty brought me at my bidding my litle mirrour, blubbering, poor wench! For indeed I am greatly changed.

It pains me, I being so sadly altered, to look upon those pictured faces that are so smiling and so young. I am minded to lay those pretty semblances of what once we were in the little recess above the mantel, in that room which saw us Betroth'd. There shall they lie, with this little Book I was minded once to show you, in coming years! Alas, my heart!

Octbr., 1782—My own sweet love, in what I do know now to be these my last few days, a something grows within me of presage and of peace. I

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know that I shall find you, "For Love is strong as Death . . . Many Waters cannot quench Love, neither can the floods drown it." I do hold fast to that as to an anchor, and I am comforted. For still shall I be I, and you, you. So O my own love, so greatly lov'd, for a little space, good-bye!"

There was no further entry. Trescott laid aside the yellowed pages, and opened the other half of the package. The girl herself smiled up at him, brown-haired, brown-eyed, rose-lipped, a wilful cleft marking her little chin. One saw on the blackened gold true lover's knot, which formed the loop of the picture, her initials—*L. K.* From the other frame, most gallantly attired, young, clear-eyed, very grave and beautiful, another Anthony Trescott looked hopefully.

The hush that fell upon Trescott seemed to communicate itself to the day itself. The very wind seemed to stand still in the cedars. Time itself passed. Then, out of the heart of the holy silence, a girl stepped, a girl all in brown, a motor bonnet swinging on her

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arm and the sunlight full upon her shining hair. At sight of him sitting there so sunk in revery, she stopped short.

"Anthony Trescott!" she breathed. And he looked up of a sudden and met, glance to glance, her intense and luminous regard.

"Lydia—Why—Lydia!" he mumbled. Blackness swooped upon him as his overwrought nerves snapped.

He came to, to find his head upon the girl's supporting arm. She was fanning him with a brown motor bonnet—a perfectly enchanting, expensive, ultra-modern motor bonnet. But Trescott had no eyes for anything save the rose-lipped face. He stared at her unblinkingly.

"Lydia," said he, gravely. "I found it, dear, your Christmas present."

"I wish to gracious I 'd brought Aunt's smelling salts!" said she, anxiously, and fell to fanning him more vigorously.

"I thought," said Trescott, sitting up, "that your message was all I could expect.

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Lydia, I didn't even dare to dream you would come. Oh, you were right—beautiful things do happen at Christmas time. For you are here! Lydia, the wonder of it!"

"But the wonderful thing is n't that I 'm here, but that I should really and truly find you here, Mr. Trescott!" said she, puzzled. "I 'm awfully sorry I startled you so; you would n't hear me coming, of course, with all this dead grass about, and I was right upon you before you saw me or I saw you, either. Then you called my name, almost as if you 'd expected me, Mr. Trescott!" she finished shyly.

"How have you come, and why have you come, here of all places under heaven, and to-day of all days in the year?" he wondered.

A dimple danced into her cheek, and her eyes danced with it.

"Why—I came, really and truly I came—on your account, Mr. Anthony Trescott!" she said gaily. "Why do you look at me so strangely? It's very simple. Don't you

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remember how in your own 'The House of Their Fathers' you made *Regina* visit, on a holy day, the house of her ancestors, just to let the poor old faithful place know that she cherished it? I thought it such a perfectly beautiful thing for Regina to do, and I made up my mind I 'd pay just such a visit to King House one of these days. I 'm one of the blood, you see: I was named for a girl who used to live here.

"It just happened that my aunt decided to motor over in her new car for a Christmas dinner with her favorite nephew and his wife and their brand-new baby that we have n't seen yet. She made me promise to come along. Poor dear, she has such a horror of motor cars I wonder she ever trusts herself in one. We stop ever so often, because she has nerves if a chicken runs across the road, or there 's a curve, or anything. She insisted we must stop for lunch at the very hotel you 're putting up at. They boasted of it, of course. You 've no idea how I felt!

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Why, I 'd been thinking for days and days and days of visiting this old place; I dreamed of it last night, and I woke up thinking of it this morning. But I never dreamed I 'd be lucky enough to run across you! It 's really wonderful to find you here, now, is n't it?"

"Yes," said Trescott, readily, "it is really wonderful, when one comes to think about it."

"I knew you at sight, of course," she said, thrilled and kindling. "You see, I 've read every sin-gle sol-i-ta-ry thing you 've ev-er written! And I 've got a full dozen or more of your pictures, all cut out of magazines and newspapers. Of course I know you! But oh, however did you happen to be here, right now? It—it seems like a lovely, happy miracle!"

"Miracles," Trescott informed her oracularly, "happen at Christmas-time, which is exactly when they should happen. I may say truthfully I came expecting to find you here too. And—here you are, you see!

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And now will you please look at me directly and tell me, in all truth, just exactly how Anthony Trescott appears to the eyes of Lydia King?"

The rose in her cheek deepened vividly. Flame leaped into her glance. "Why, Mr. Trescott, I think you are marvelous—quite the most wonderful person in the whole world!" she blurted out naïvely, then blushed more deeply because of her own words. Nevertheless she kept his eyes bravely.

"I remember," she said, "the first day I ever read one of your books and how it was like a voice I knew talking to me. And I remember the first time I saw your picture. It—it jumped out of the page, and I shut my eyes and counted ten before I could look at it again. Somehow I 'd known you were going to be like that, Mr. Trescott. Was n't it curious? And I eat and drink your books and live with them, and dream with them. I don't very well see, then, how I could help

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thinking you 're the most wonderful person alive—everybody else thinks so too—or they should think so!"

Praise, fulsome and flattering, praise critical, had been showered upon Trescott in his time, but this clean glowing living understanding was as deep calling unto deep.

"We will dismiss 'everybody else,' " he decided, "and consider only you and me. Now sit down here beside me, for I have something to show you," and he laid the little book in her hand.

She read, and the radiance died from her; the eyes she lifted to his were too old and sad and wise for her young mouth, her child's dimple.

"I can hardly bear it!" she said in a stifled voice.

Trescott smiled consolingly. "All over and done with, Lydia. For you are here—and I also," he reminded her, and put the two pictures, so fresh and smiling, in her palm.

She turned pearly white. "Why,—

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they're us!" she gasped. They looked at each other mutely. Then, in a low voice, he told her.

"We seem to have been caring and waiting and hoping a long, long time, don't we, Lydia?"

She sat very, very still, staring straight in front of her. And again the wind ceased to move in the cedars, and over all the shining day hung a waiting hush. Then, timidly, she put out her hand, and the man's closed upon it.

"Anthony!" her voice broke a little. "Anthony, are you—quite sure?"

"And you?"

"I want you," she said, "to take back my picture. And to give me yours once more. That's how sure I am!" She turned to him a face sweet with trust, bright with faith.

After a while, she roused herself from the dream into which, side by side, both had fallen.

"Hadn't we better go?" she ventured.

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"I think it must have been just here that Anthony Trescott kissed Lydia King"

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"My aunt is getting ready for another fit of nerves, right now, I know it! Come on, the car's waiting down the road, and we can make the hotel in half an hour."

They walked slowly, hand in hand; at the broken gate they stopped for a moment.

"I think it must have been just here," he said, "that—that Anthony Trescott—kissed Lydia King." And he looked down at her.

For a moment she hesitated; then youth, sheer dazzling joyous beautiful youth, flashed into fire within her and swept her free of every vestige of grief; a rosy finger flew to her lip and her eyes full of innocent mischief smiled at him enchantingly. And, as his arms closed upon her, "It's—it's a long, long time between kisses!" said Lydia King.

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THE YOUNGEST OFFICER

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THE YOUNGEST OFFICER

JUNIOR'S consciousness of himself as an individual seems to have begun upon the day when the major's wife came out of his mother's room, and, finding him sitting lonesomely upon the stairs, sat down beside him and gathered him into a tight embrace.

"Kindy," said he, kindly but insistently pressing a fat forefinger against her cheek, "you 're k'yin'. What you k'yin' 'bout, Kindy?"

"Oh, precious little man!" murmured Mrs. Kennedy gulpingly. "And she so young—and so beautiful—and so loved—and with you and the captain—"

The three-year-old wriggled his sturdy little body out of her embrace and got on his feet. His small shoulders straightened, a

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trick he had from his father. His clear and questioning eyes refused to be evaded. "Vey said," he whispered, " 'at she was goin' 'way, Kindy. Is she goin' 'way?"

"Junior," began the major's wife miserably, "Junior—"

"Is she goin' 'way, Kindy?"

The major's wife began to weep then because she could n't help it. And somehow Junior understood. His gaze widened. "Is she 'fwaid to go, Kindy?" he wondered.

"She—she—We haven't told her, Junior," quavered Mrs. Kennedy. She beat her hands together softly, palm to palm. "We—we can't tell her! She—oh, my God!"

Junior pondered. It was characteristic of him that he usually knew what to do—and did it. Before Mrs. Kennedy could seize upon him again he had reached his mother's room, where his father stood with clenched hands and a face stony with agony. The colonel's wife, a stout old lady, sat in a chair,

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all in a pale heap. A doctor, compassionately professional, conferred in a low voice with a nurse who held a hypodermic syringe. The chaplain, with his face in his cupped hands, prayed in a trembling whisper.

Junior paid no attention to these, but trotted up to the bed and took his young mother's limp hand in his own warm moist fingers. "Poo' Muzzer," he cooed. "Darlin' Muzzer, 'peak to Duny."

The great tragic eyes opened. Wanly she tried to smile.

Junior's warm pressure tightened comfortingly. "Must n't be 'fwaid," he told her sweetly, while the helpless grown-ups watched him. "Booful Muzzer, must n't be 'fwaid to go 'way."

"Am I—going away?" she murmured.

Junior kept his steady baby glance on hers and nodded.

For a moment a spasm quivered across her face, and her eyes sought help piteously; for she was very, very young. Then her eyes

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came back to Junior's, and, as if they had found what they sought, stayed there.

"Nothin' to be 'fwaid of, sweetie Muzzer. Nothin' to be 'fwaid of," said he, repeating in her hour of stress the lessons her simple faith had taught him. "Dust teep tight hol' on my han' an' go sleepy. It 'll be all light then."

She smiled again, more faintly but without a trace of fear. And so, clinging to her baby's hand, she went to sleep. It was "all light then."

The major's wife took the little hand gently away from Junior's. To his mind his mother had simply gone to the "lovely country"; she had told him so herself. So she stayed in his memory, becoming in time shadowy but very real and vital. And she left him, as a legacy, her love for his father.

The post mothered Junior, from the woman who washed his rompers to the colonel's wife, who did her best to spoil him.

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And every man in the regiment was his sworn blood brother, whom he knew from the soul to the shoe straps. He, as it were, embodied in his gallant little person the esprit de corps of the army.

An education like Junior's affects one very materially. When you know that your great-grandfather fell at Malvern Hill and your grandfather at El Caney, that your own, ownest daddy bears scars from San Juan—and all in the service, in the same old regiment—why, you get a sense of personal responsibility. The service looms very largely upon your perspective. You learn to carry your head up, your eyes level, your chin out, your back straight; to fight fair and to hit hard, and to look every man in the eye. And you must never, never, never forget that always and in all circumstances you 're an officer and a gentleman. You 've got to live up to yourself and the service.

Life was immensely interesting and livable. Junior did n't know that the word

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"unhappiness" existed until orders came for the regiment to go into exile. In construing the word "unhappiness," however, one learns to estimate the value of its twin-sister word "duty."

"Orders," said the captain, looking very hard at Junior, "are to be obeyed, without whimpering."

Junior brought his hand to his forehead, sat stiffly erect, and used all his endeavor to keep his chin from quivering. He did wink and he did gulp a little, but on the whole his behavior was a credit to the regimental system of instruction for a small boy who is going to be a soldier himself some day—and he knew it. This helped further to stiffen his backbone.

"Yes, sir," he agreed gravely.

"My orders," said the captain, "mean that I must leave you, Junior. Your orders are to stay at home and be a credit to us. You 're the youngest officer, you know, and you 've got to represent us older fellows.

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That 's a man-sized job; but I think you can hold it down, don't you?"

Junior considered. "I can try mighty hard to, sir," said he, still more erect.

The big captain reached out a long arm and caught up the little son. He spoke with his face against the soft light hair: "You see, I 'd have to be sending you away from me pretty soon anyhow, Junior. You should n't be tagging around from post to post, half the time thick as thieves with rookies. The women—God bless 'em!—have been so good that you have n't fared badly. But you ought to have a regular home. I know it. Only—since your mother left us—I could n't bear to part with you. I could n't bear to make you do without me, either. We 're all we 've got, you know, old chap."

The little boy's arm tightened about his father's neck.

"I 'd like to send you to my old school, to put you in training for the Point. But I can't do it yet, son. That 'll come later.

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Just now I 'd rather you 'd be at home with somebody that 's kin to you. So I 've written your Great-Aunt Lydia, and she 'll come for you. I think she 'll be glad to have you. I think she 's going to love you a lot as soon as she knows you. You 're pretty decent, Youngest Officer,—thank God! Anybody 'd love you, let alone my good old aunt. And now—I 'm going to give you something, little son."

He took from his breast pocket a light, fine gold chain from which swung a little flat locket. When you pressed a spring it was as if a tiny golden door opened to reveal an angel—so lovely, so pure, so tender the face within. The captain kissed it with reverence, then he pulled back Junior's collar and clasped the little chain about his neck.

"You 're to wear this locket and chain," said his father, "day and night. It 's your talisman. You 're to remember that she 's with you; proud and happy when you win out, Junior, sad and sorry when you fail.

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Why, boy, you 're her son! You 've got to live up to her and the regiment. Don't you ever forget that, my son. And—just hold on to me tight for a while, old chap, won't you?"

In the days that followed it seemed to Junior that his pleasant world was disintegrating. Faces that were as his landmarks vanished. Always sad and tired, his father's eyes were now heavy with the pain of parting. Somehow as he clung silently to the big brown hand the little boy's mind went straight back to that day when another hand —a small cold hand—had been taken from his clinging fingers. But he had n't been trained militarily for nothing. He kept his chin up and he did n't cry—at least not until after lights were out.

A tall, thin, stately old woman came presently. Daddy called her "Aunt Lydia" and kissed her withered cheek with real affection and respect. He, too, had lived at her house

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when he was a little boy. She held Junior firmly by the hand when the train pulled out and took the Youngest Officer away from his regiment and his captain.

Now when you 've been raised on a gun barrel, as it were, and your rising up and your lying down have been at the bugle's call, and everybody from your colonel down calls you "Son" and loves you like one, why, it 's rather like pulling you up by the roots—without water—to plump you of a sudden in a calm, still, old New England town with a calm, still, old New England lady who has n't been used to a little boy for perfect ages, and the nearest soldiers those in the grass-grown cemetery.

Aunt Lydia was painfully just and kind. You saw her see her duty and do it. She had a way of fixing her eyes upon you and drawing her lips together and saying in a missionary-to-the-heathen voice: "Good Heavens! This child 's been allowed to run perfectly wild! Those awful men! Oh, this

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must be seen to at once!" And it was.

Junior learned to close doors with terrifying gentleness, because it seemed to Aunt Lydia a heinous thing to have them shut with the slightest healthy slam. No; properly raised children open and shut doors gingerly, as if, say, the doorknobs were loaded and might go off; and they enter a room with becoming meekness of demeanor. Junior also learned never, never to rush into the house. He was n't really inclined to rush into the house, anyhow. When he had done so it was only half-heartedly, just to pretend that there was something to rush to. He learned to slide punctually into his place at table at one minute to six, dinner being served on the stroke, and to sit through the meal silently, being as silently served. This at first brought poignant comparisons of gay riots with Mrs. Lieutenant's frolicsome four, and allowance of dessert with Mr. Lieutenant—sometimes with the chaplain, sometimes with the fat, jolly major, always with Daddy. In

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time, however, one becomes accustomed to everything, even to silence at table. Aunt Lydia wrote to Daddy, cautiously admitting that the boy was well-behaved, truthful, and hardly any trouble at all. Which is praise indeed from a maiden lady.

Next to his father's letters Junior's greatest solace, friend, and help was old McAndrews, who lived in two fascinating rooms over the stable and managed Miss Lydia's comfortable estate—and Miss Lydia. There existed between these two a curious friendship. McAndrews, Junior thought, was the oldest person alive. When Miss Lydia's bedtime chapter had been fifth Genesis Junior had glanced rather uneasily at McAndrews, who seemed to him actually to visualize those long-lived gentlemen whose many years Aunt Lydia was sonorously enumerating.

All of a ripe eighty, with a hale, ruddy face framed in a New England snow of beard, McAndrews had known every Palmer

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born for three quarters of a century. What tales of them he told Junior! Some of them sailors, some of them soldiers, all of them men of action. Junior's Daddy was in his memory as a little boy, a youngster fresh from West Point, a big brown fellow home from Cuba. And oh, more wonderful than all, he had known Junior's mamma, for she had lived within a few miles of this self-same little town! She was, he said, the most beautiful girl in the world. Even yet his voice broke a little when he talked about her.

He used to take Junior by the hand and go trudging over the country-side in heavenliest rambles. Every house called for a history in detail, until once they passed a fine old place set back from the road, embowered among many elms, and McAndrews, pausing, glowered at it silently. He had n't intended to take Junior by the Holcomb house, and he was angry with himself.

"What a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful

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place!" said Junior, attracted by the old mansion and its magnificent trees.

"Aye!" snarled McAndrews.

"I wish," said Junior, "that I could climb up in those trees, McAndrews, or roll in the grass beneath them. I like how this place looks. Whose house is it?"

"That," said the old man after a pause, "is the Holcomb house. And," he added, shaking his stick at it, "if it had n't belonged to an old devil it might have sheltered a young angel. That door's closed to you and your father, boy; it was closed against your mother."

McAndrews trudged along in grim silence for a while, and Junior, too, had no words. His heart was beating fast. His mother had lived there in that place! But why had those doors been closed against her and him and Daddy? Junior could n't understand. Nobody at the post had ever told him anything about her, save that she was very young and very, very lovely. But of a sud-

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den, as if he thought the little boy should know, McAndrews began to tell him more.

She had been a great heiress, McAndrews said—that is, very, very rich. Her papa and mamma had been very vain and proud of her, and they had planned that she was to make what is called a great marriage: that is, they wanted her to marry a man they knew who wished to marry her—a man who had millions of dollars. But she had laughed and shaken her head.

Then came the Captain from El Caney, with a wounded leg and a great grief upon him because of the gallant old father he had left behind. Everybody had been nice to him and had been proud of the handsome young man; but the nicest and proudest of all had been the most beautiful girl in the world.

"Because," said McAndrews, "those two just were made to love each other. They could n't help it."

But when the captain went to Aaron Hol-

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comb to ask for the most beautiful girl there had been a terrible to-do. They said he should n't have her; they said he was n't anything but a poor soldier with nothing but his pay; they said she 'd have to choose between nothing but a soldier and them; and that she would have to marry another man, anyhow. Then she had put her hand in the captain's and chosen him. Neither her father nor her mother had ever looked upon her face again, nor named her name, nor given any sign when she wrote to tell them about the little boy that presently came to live with her and the captain. They had n't even given a sign when they were told that she had left the little boy and the soldier. So the little boy really had n't any grandparents, you understand. In the place that should have been his they had put a little great-grand-niece, who was to get all that was theirs.

"Ah!" said McAndrews angrily, "how could anybody think of casting out an angel, and a soldier, and a little chap that was an

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honor to their blood?" Moved out of himself, he dove into his pocket and gave Junior his own treasured clasp-knife—for keeps!

That night when Junior opened the little locket he kissed with a deeper tenderness her girlish face. And somehow, as if she had gently whispered it into his soul, he began to be sorry for that sad, bad old man and woman who had turned away from her and could n't ever call her back again.

Junior could n't say that he was actually unhappy at Miss Lydia's; she was too really just and kind to make anybody truly unhappy. But he was horribly lonely at times. He missed, as little boys do so acutely, just lovingness. He could n't actually put it into words, you know; but he wanted people to do things for him because they loved him and wanted to, not because it was their duty.

There were many lessons and much studying to catch up, for Miss Lydia said the child's education had been, to say the least, peculiar and irregular. Miss Lydia only

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knew some of the things Junior did n't know; she could n't guess the many fine and tender and beautiful lessons the regiment had taught him, because she was a reticent old lady and Junior a shy little boy.

With the first snows and the red sled McAndrews had bought for him things picked up. He was getting along fairly well in the mazes of modern learning. He had n't done anything that the regiment would blush for. He had had, too, a few good gallant fights, in which he had borne himself like a man of his hands, thereby winning the enthusiastic friendship of those whom he had "licked." Also just outside of the small town was a particular hill high enough and breakneck enough to satisfy even the most ardent little boy's desire for thrills, and a pond big enough to hold a whole townful of skaters. Junior began to think that life, even outside of the post, may be pleasant enough—in spots.

It was on the rather lonesome road leading

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to the pond that Junior fell in with the Fairy at the close of a particularly freezing day. The Fairy was obviously out of her element, but was just as obviously delighted with the fact. Floundering waist-deep in drifts had draggled her fine furbelows; for she was most gorgeously "got up," as a fairy should be. One mitten had gone, leaving bare a little hand turned purple from the cold. Under her furred cap her eyes were dancingly, gayly blue,—almost as bravely, steadily blue as Junior's. Escaped in many an ensnaring curl, her hair was of an indescribably bright gold. At sight of Junior and his sled she gave a squeak of delight, holding out both hands.

Her name, she said, was Ga'sie. His? Oh, just Junior. Junior was really hungry to have somebody call him that again. Aunt Lydia would n't. She disapproved of it. She said it was n't a name, it was a sort of appellation. But Junior thought it brought the post and the colonel and the major and

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the rookies and Daddy a little nearer. Somehow it made him feel as if it were not himself, but some other little boy, when people addressed him as "Bruce Palmer." The Fairy, however, accepted "Junior" beamingly. Only, as he himself had once done, she called it "Duny." Duny began to adore her right then.

He knew that the proper thing was to put her on his sled and haul her home; but this she brought to naught by not knowing where home might be. Junior at her bidding put her on his sled and hauled her about the pond, wrapping her bare little hand in his own larger mitten. They had a beautiful time, for never was a fairy more graciously delightful to a little boy hungry for one.

Junior was sorry when a giant in livery dashed, panting, out of the growing gloom and swooped upon the Fairy with exclamations of joy and reproach. Not a word of gratitude was bestowed upon Junior; noth-

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ing but a growling threat against bad boys that helped runaways.

"Duny finded me, nas'y man!" shrieked the Fairy, kicking with all the force of her short legs. "I tummin' 'den, Duny! Doo'-by! Doo'-by!"

Junior went home rather unwillingly. There was n't anybody there to play with nor to snuggle against. Under the bleak gray sky, in the fading light, Miss Lydia's square brick house looked squarer and brickier than ever; it did n't look a bit warm and welcoming, but rather as if it thrust out angular elbows to push one away. And the Fairy had been so like Mrs. Lieutenant's youngest that it made Junior's eyes smart. If crying weren't "cowardy custardy" he could have cried copiously; but the regiment discourages sniffling.

As it was he was a full seven minutes late for dinner, which waited coldly for him, Miss Lydia rigidly resigned in her high-backed chair. She did n't say one word; she

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just looked at the clock and then at Junior. And the clock spoke up for her: "Sev-en min-utes late for din-ner! Sev-en min-utes late for din-ner!" The little boy's ears burned.

He did n't mention the Fairy. He had never even mentioned the pond itself. Miss Lydia had a fashion of worriedly wrinkling her brows, pursing her lips, and asking aloud: "Should that child be allowed to run about so much by himself? Is that pond"—or that hill, or that road, or that anything else—"perfectly safe? Perhaps, Bruce, you would better stay within calling distance of the house to-day."

Within calling distance of the house was out of calling distance of any reasonable diversion. Junior did n't want to stay away from the pond. She had n't said he could n't go, but then she might, after the unaccountable fashion of grown-ups. Junior wisely held his peace.

For instance, he had been forbidden by McAndrews to go down the big road curving

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by the Holcomb house. So although he desired above all things to see the place where his mother had played as a little girl, he did n't go.

He had, too, an almost fearful curiosity to see those two who had lost her. In his short experience everybody had been kind, so he could n't believe that unkind and naughty folks can look just like ordinary people. No, indeed. You can always tell the witch by her long nose and her curved chin and her fierce eyes; and the ogre usually has sharp and bloody teeth, has n't he?

His mother became to his mind like one of those beautiful and charming princesses who are detained by a wicked king and queen, but who escape and ride away on the crupper of the prince's big black steed. And, despite his fear of the old king and queen whom she had left, Junior wanted to see that house in which she had grown up.

The place, he learned later, was open. The old king and queen were staying there

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that winter, after an absence of years. Distant cousins, nephews, nieces, and their wives and husbands and children filled up the many big rooms, for they were to spend Christmas there. Preparations for that great event were already under way on a huge scale. Sleighs full of noisy, laughing folks dashed by Miss Lydia's house; wagons loaded with crates and bales and bundles went to and fro. But the little boy who was the lost princess's son flattened his small nose against Miss Lydia's diamond-paned windows, watched them wistfully and had no place in their thoughts, their merrymakings or their hearts. His very existence was quite as effectually ignored as it had always been. But, somehow, keeping faith with his mother's sweetness, Junior did n't feel ill treated or resentful; he only felt sorry.

"Poor things!" he said to her at night, "they have n't got you any more; and Daddy and I have."

Because of a slight cold he had been

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strictly kept indoors of late, and it palled upon him who was by nature free. If there had been any small folks to keep him company he would n't have minded so much, but there was n't anybody. And oh, how he wanted to go out and find that fairy again!

Aunt Lydia, as she said herself, was n't much of a hand for visiting. She sent you fine clear jellies and flaky bread and cake and spicy pickles and steaming broths by way of neighborliness, but she never seemed to give you herself. So she was n't what you 'd call really sociable. People did n't drop in to see Aunt Lydia and bring the children and stay for tea. Good gracious, no! When they called they sat stately on the horsehair parlor sofa, and pretended to be thawed out by the frosty fire which had just been kindled, and talked about church work, district visitin' and the Woman's Auxiliary. Junior thought at first that this latter was something to wear; later he decided that it was something akin to the rheumatism which

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stiffened Aunt Lydia's fingers, or the everlasting cold which made Mrs. Pepper's voice like a crow's. It was uninteresting, however, anyway you looked at it. Junior usually managed by polite degrees to slide out of the room. Once when he had closed the door gently upon half an hour of Auxiliary he had met the cat in the hall and promptly kicked her. This was one act for which Junior afterward blushed. The cat got sleek on tidbits covertly fed to her by way of expiation.

Just before Christmas, the weather being then mild, Aunt Lydia pronounced Junior's cold cured and set him free. She was very busy with Christmas cakes herself just then.

Junior made straight for the pond. Because of the thaw, the ice, although not actually dangerous, was pretty thin in spots, and Junior avoided these spots carefully. He knew that recklessness is n't bravery. When it comes down to risking your life—

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for other people's safety—why, you 've just got to take it in your ten fingers and risk it, that 's all. That 's the code. Otherwise you keep yourself in trust and you are careful.

Over on the farther shore, under the shadow of the trees, the ice was still thick and firm, and Junior flew up and down this shore until his blood tingled joyously. The rapid flight made him almost forget for a few minutes how horribly he wanted his Daddy, to hear him speak, to hold his hand. Christmas had always been so gay at the post; this year he was away from the regiment, and it came bitterly hard.

After a while he sat down, and, chin in hand, wondered about his captain 'way over in the Philippines. Oh, was n't he missing Junior, just as Junior was aching for him? And was n't he, too, feeling "all by himself"? A big, big lump grew and grew and grew in the little boy's throat. You do miss people terribly just about Christmas-time,

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you know. Despite pride and the regiment's scorn of a cry-baby a full half-dozen extra-sized tears ran bitingly down his cold cheeks.

And just then there fell upon his shoulder a small, light, friendly hand.

"What you k'yin' 'bout, Duny?" demanded the Fairy, thrusting the little hand comfortingly into his. "Darlin' Duny, don't you k'y!" Of her own accord she put up her rosy mouth and kissed him roundly. Junior did n't say a word. He could n't. But he put his arms about her warm little body and snuggled her. She felt like a plaster upon his sore heart.

"Wanted to see you, Duny," she said placidly, stroking his cheek. "Ga'sie love Duny. 'Nen I yunned and yunned and yunned. Dot nas'y Fräulein!" And she fetched a great sigh as if from a deeply afflicted bosom; but her expression was so impish that Junior laughed aloud and hugged her again.

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A stout young woman broke through the screen of bushes behind them, panting and indignant.

"*Ach*, thou naughty one! *Himmel*, but I have this day run!" she gurgled. "Leave the boy and come away instantly."

The Fairy turned into the Fury. Down came the small foot, stamping; the mittened hands doubled, the face grew raging.

"I tummed to fin' Duny. I want Duny. Duny take me home. You go 'way!"

But the Fräulein advanced, stretching out a determined hand.

"Shall thy mother and thy rich uncle ask for thee, naughty one, and I answer that I left thee in the forest with a strange wild one of these parts?" she demanded.

The Fairy backed off warily. In a second she was in full flight, flying toward those danger signals in the center of the pond—signals which meant nothing to her. And Junior, with an eagle swoop, flew after her; but the Fairy was like one of her own elfin

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race and evaded his clutching fingers, ignored his warning cries.

Just beyond the second pole she slipped, slid forward a few feet, the thin ice crackling under her. Then the ice tipped and her bright head disappeared. Junior found himself staring horror-stricken into the black hole which had swallowed her. He waited for her to reappear, but there was n't even a ripple on the surface of the black water which hid her.

Sheer panic came upon him and by the very newness and terror of the sensation he realized that for the first time in his life he was scared, just plain scared. He was but nine. He was n't a particularly good swimmer; even if he had been, one can't swim under ice. There was n't a rope nor any help near save the German woman screeching to Heaven in her own tongue.

And then Junior remembered the regiment. Why, he held the honor of the old regiment in the hollow of his hand! It was

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just as if he'd heard his captain's voice: "... the Youngest Officer ... representing us older fellows ..." And the face in his locket! His heart fell to beating naturally. Off came skates, cap, shoes, jacket. Junior, with his eyes wide open, disappeared after the Fairy.

One would n't think that water could be so cold—so alive, as it were. It seemed to Junior as he went under, groping for the child, that the water had gripping fingers that caught at him, trying to hold him down.

There was n't much trouble in getting the Fairy, who had stayed down. The only trouble was to get her back to the opening—and the ice was so thin just there—and the water was above his head—

A million years marched over Junior's head before he got it above water, dragging the limp child up with him. With one hand he held her, chin just above the surface; with the other he tried to hold on to the edge of the ice. His choking cry was

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answered by a longer, louder, shriller scream from the governess, a piercing cry that brought a flying sleigh to a standstill a hundred yards down the road and sent its two men occupants running toward the sound.

The Fairy was unconscious then, and heavier than lead in Junior's numbing grip. He barely managed to hold on. He does n't remember how they pulled him out of those icy fingers which seemed to hold him. He heard shouts; saw, as it were, a flash of fire before his eyes; felt himself go, and then darkness came upon him.

Along with the Fairy he was bundled into the sleigh and rushed to a house, whither doctors were wildly summoned, and a great hush fell upon joyous Christmas preparations.

Not a soul in his mother's house knew him who should have been best known and loved of all. They only knew that this strange child had at the risk of his life saved little Grace's, and a sense of gratitude sent Mrs. Holcomb herself to the room where he had

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He tried to hold on

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been brought. She helped to remove his soaked and icy garments. She noticed then the locket at his sturdy throat, and later, while the others were working upon him, she took off the locket to see if by chance it might inform her who he was.

Just as she smiled at Junior nightly, when he kissed her before he went to sleep, so the little lost Princess smiled now, tenderly, exquisitely, in her mother's face.

The woman staggered; but she was a proud old woman, so she didn't scream aloud. Only, in a bound she was back by the bed, and all pale and trembling looked down at her child's child, and wondered why she hadn't known him at once. Oh, great and terrible link of Love, that Time and Death might weaken but could not break! She knew him for blood of her blood; she wanted to snatch up his beautiful unconscious body in her arms, as if through him she might touch once more that other one. It was as if God had drawn back a curtain

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and let her see the result of her own pride and folly; as if his lost mother's shadowy shape stood beside him and looked at her and reproached her for what had befallen him.

She gave a great cry at that and ran out of the room, with Junior's "talisman" in her hand. With a stirred and pale face she came up to her husband, who, seated in the hall, waited for news of little Grace.

"Is Grace—" he began, alarmed at sight of her pallor. But she shook her head impatiently. Grace was—Grace—dear and beloved of course, but the other child was *hers*.

"The little boy!" she gasped. "Aaron, Aaron—the little boy! Come, come at once!" And she dragged him to his feet.

Wondering if her mind were shaken he followed.

Junior was just giving faint signs of life under the doctor's hand. His thick light hair fluffed about his forehead in the curls he hated, and his black lashes showed the

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marble of his cheek. But the brave little face was one which a whole fighting regiment adored.

"Coming around now. But he's had a tussle for it, the brave little chap! Must have the grit of a man to hold out as long as he did," mumbled the doctor.

But the old lady paid no attention to the doctor. She just dropped on her knees by the bed and took Junior's hand in hers and kissed it. She had ten years' tears to shed, and they burst over the child in a terrible flood.

The old man sank into a chair, his knees giving way beneath him. He did n't need to look into the locket thrust into his hand; he knew too well whose unforgotten face looked out of its small gold door. So he looked instead at the face on the pillow, a face to make any father glad and proud. Presently the slow and awful tears of an old man who has done wrong, and suffers for it, crawled into his eyes.

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He and his wife were still with Junior when McAndrews, stern and bitter, and Miss Lydia, in tears, came to demand the captain's son. Even the grief and remorse that met him could n't quite soften McAndrews.

"Give us the boy and let us go," said McAndrews.

But the old lady kneeling beside Junior tightened her clasp. "Take him away from us? Now?" she asked.

"And why not now when he 's naught to you?" asked McAndrews. For he was touched to the heart about the lad, and angry and sore against these people. "This roof," he said stoutly, "is no place for the captain's son to bide under. He 's needin' no care from them that never had aught to give him, not even Christian kindness. Sir and Ma'am, keep you your gold and your pride, and her you 've put in his place and that he 's given back to you. You 're welcome to them all. Miss Lydia and I, that love him, will take and keep our little lad."

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The old man sitting sorrowfully beside the bed lifted his face and met Miss Lydia's gaze. All the pride and hardness had gone, leaving him what he was in reality—a sad and sorry old man, lonely in his age and his gray hairs.

"I am glad—that you have at least seen him; that he has been able to render you so great a service," said Miss Lydia, proudly. "Oh, such a good, brave, gallant little soldier! It may ease your burden to know him as he is—a credit to his father's name—and to his mother's memory."

McAndrews blew his nose fiercely then to conceal his feelings, and said grumpily: "Let us take the child and go."

But the doctor would n't have it. He said McAndrews was a crazy old man who talked as if he wanted to kill the child outright, after all the trouble they 'd had to pull him through.

When Junior woke up a brand-new, sunbright, glittering day was getting the earth

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ready for Christmas. But never in his life had Junior felt so weak and tired as he did that morning. If it had n't been that a strange new room caught his attention at once—and he a most curious and observant little boy, bound to investigate everything new—he 'd have snuggled under the covers and gone right back to sleep.

Miss Lydia, however, had seen his eyes open and she spoke to him. Her face wore a brand-new, sun-bright look too—a sort of unlocked, doors-open look. She kissed him as if she 'd been waiting to do it a long time and was glad to have the chance, and she called him "Junior" in a tone that widened his eyes.

Over Miss Lydia's shoulder came two other faces: both old, both gray, both sad and loving and entreating; both begging with their eyes for Junior to look at them and be friends. They seemed nice old people, he thought. The old man now—there was something in that old man's hungry,

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grim, stern, loving face that called to something just like it 'way down deep in Junior.

"Why, he 's better, thank God! He 's all right! He 's all right!" said the old man, and his eyes went right on claiming Junior.

But Junior was just then remembering things. Then came his first words—the words of a youngest officer. "Is—is the Fairy all right?" he asked anxiously.

"I suppose," said the old man, smiling, "that you mean our little Gracie. Oh, yes, she 's all right this morning, thanks to you."

Junior's hand went right up to the locket that had been replaced about his throat. He gave a sigh of satisfaction; he knew that she 'd understand and be pleased.

"Oh, darling child!" said the old lady. "You have been so brave."

Junior blushed a little, remembering that he had been frightened.

"Why, you have to," he said simply. "You 're scared, you know; but you must n't

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stop for that. *She'd* feel pretty bad; and—there 's the regiment."

"The regiment?" The old man's brows bunched, but he looked at the little man with a great and growing pride; the pride, say, of an old lion for a particularly promising cub.

"Ours," explained the youngest officer and gentleman in it. "My grandfather's, who died at El Caney; my father's and mine."

"I see," said the old man, thoughtfully. "I 'd like, sir," he added respectfully, "to shake hands with you. For the regiment, you know."

Junior got it the other way about. His mother's own sunshiny smile broke over his face and he put out a frank hand. But he could n't understand why this old man should hold his hand so long and so tight, nor why Aunt Lydia and the other old lady should turn aside their heads, nor why tears should run down the old man's cheeks. Also he wished they 'd tell him where he was

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and how he got there, and who they were that seemed to claim him.

"My head," he explained, "got sort of twirly and I can't remember just how I came here. Would you mind telling me, sir?"

"This," said the old man, and his eyes seemed to bore right through Junior, "is the Holcomb house. My name is Aaron Holcomb, and that lady there is my wife." And he drew her forward to stand beside him.

Astonishment and open disbelief struggled in Junior's face. Why, this was a *nice* old man; and one might very, very easily love this old lady. It simply could n't be these people who had driven "her" away!

"Are n't there," he wanted to know hopefully, "two Aaron Holcombs? Is n't there another one—not like you?"

The old man winced, for he could n't help reading in the child's face the meaning of that question. "No," said he gravely, "there is just one—myself."

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"Oh, no!" protested Junior. "Not you! You—you don't look like *that!*—either of you!"

So they stared at each other. And presently the child nodded, reaching right down to the secretest bottom of that proud old heart. "I think," he said sweetly, "that you must have been awfully sorry and sad and ashamed after you'd let her go. Because, you know, you couldn't get her back ever any more."

Aaron Holcomb flung out his hands with a groaning cry. "I was!" he whispered. "I am! I am!" But his old wife came and took his arm.

"Don't you think," she said to Junior, "that you'd like to stay with us, little grandson? We want you so much; and maybe—after a while, dear—you'd even grow to love us."

Junior considered. He liked these two old people already; they were n't in the least ogreish, but on the contrary very, very pleas-

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ant to look at. He wanted to stay in his mother's old home; he rather thought she'd like him to stay there. But if he left Miss Lydia and McAndrews, who had been so kind to him, would n't the regiment think he'd flunked? Would the regiment approve?

Miss Lydia herself settled the matter out of hand. "I have a piece of Christmas news for you, Junior," she said, with a very tender smile. "Your father's coming home on leave of absence—soon. And until he comes I think you'd better stay right here and get acquainted with your grandparents. Then you can *both* stay with me."

"All right!" said Junior, rather sleepily.

"He's going to stay, Aaron. We can have him!" said his grandmother, and she bestowed upon Miss Lydia a look full of gratitude.

"And play with the Fairy. I love the Fairy," said Junior, more drowsily. His eyelids could n't stay open; he went to sleep.

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With immense pride and tenderness his grandfather bent over him. Delicately he moved the fair head on the pillow and touched the ruffled hair. Then he laid his hand on his wife's shoulder and kissed her as he had n't kissed her since the Princess went away.

"Bone of our bone, Jenny, flesh of our flesh," he said. "My grandson—my little grandson!" He bent over and kissed Junior, and his wife and Miss Lydia knew he was kissing Junior's mother then too.

Even McAndrews, who had come to see his lad, had n't a word to say.

"Give me his father's address, Miss Lydia," the grandfather said presently. "I 'm going to cable my son to come home to us. And now you women clear out. Jenny, you 're to fix—*her* room for my grandson. Miss Lydia, won't you please help us to get his Christmas tree ready? Sit down in the library and write out a list of the things you think he might like—you help her, Mc-

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Andrews, please. We're to have the big-best Christmas ever, Miss Lydia. Why, I want the whole town to come here Christmas night and welcome my boy home." He sat down and waved his stick at them to leave him.

As they went out McAndrews grudgingly held forth his hand. "*I* loved him before *you* ever clapped an eye upon him," he said, surlily.

But Aaron Holcomb only shook his head. "That's why I have to sit here and get acquainted with him," he said. "You see, he was born nine years old to me. Besides, he might wake up and want something, and I've got to pray, McAndrews, that that something'll be me."

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LINDEN GOES HOME

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LINDEN GOES HOME

OVER the entire region, through which distracted beings wandered like lost souls, there hung by day a column of smoke and by night a pillar of fire. A calamity that one named Sherman—a vast, awful blue thundercloud edged with crooked, bright gleams of bayonets—spread from Atlanta to the sea.

Everybody was running; one's destination did not seem to make much difference, so long as it happened to be somewhere else. Then when one reached somewhere else, folks were flying from there, too; so that women and young children and old men and scared negro servants milled around in a horrid circle of fear.

When her fleeing friends besought the lit-

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tle lady in black—not alone for her own sake—to leave lone "Linden," just off the Hardeeville Road, she shook her head with the obstinacy of the meek. Wherefore they went their ways and left her.

"I feel," she remarked presently to old Cindy, "I feel as if I were the only person left in the big, empty, lost world the day after the Day of Judgment. Everything 's happened that could happen; everything 's finished and done with."

What she really meant was that *he* had fallen. Understanding this, Cindy reached over and soothingly patted her hand.

Only the master and mistress had never been afraid of Cindy; they had always been kind to the gruesomely ugly old African. Cindy remembered; and now that the other negroes had gone like chaff before the wind, and the little desolate lady needed immediate help, Cindy marched unasked up to the Big House and took capable charge.

So long as Cindy stayed in the Big House,

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no negro would willingly cross its threshold. *Cindy was obi.* Dowered with evil power, in the dark she dug baleful roots, and with these and the fearsome "swamp-puppy," cast spells and talked with h'ants. Her very appearance inspired terror. She was nearly six feet tall, though age had somewhat stooped her broad shoulders, and under her black turban her head was quite bald. Her little red eyes were so deep-set that one felt rather than saw their snake-bright glitter. From her blue gums (*blue-gummed negroes are poison; if one should bite you, you would die*) projected canine teeth of incredible length. When Cindy drew back her withered lips, and her face, with its wrinkled forehead, and enormous nostrils, twitched in silent laughter, one wished to run away. Only the gentle eyes of the little mistress had ever looked with affection and trust upon that grotesque mask.

When the disturbing rumor spread that they were coming toward Linden, Cindy

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instantly decided to remove her mistress, willy-nilly, to some place less lonely. There was in Columbia a favorite kinswoman, Mrs. DeSaussure. They would go to her. Linden was left to its fate.

At Hardeeville an old man who had loved the master of Linden managed to find a place in the overcrowded train for his widow, and big Cindy crouched at her feet. At every station were dolorous crowds; and long lines of vehicles, all piled with household effects, came and went, moving endlessly, aimlessly, in a horrible confusion, as in a nightmare. Always, in a cleared space upon the platforms, were narrow, long pine boxes—waiting. Sometimes the old negroes who had come to receive these boxes broke into lamentable cries and wailings. But the white men and women took them away silently, being as silently watched by the rows of sad faces in the train windows. The little lady in black, looking upon them, gripped her hands together in her lap; she also had

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received such a six-foot box from the front.

They reached Columbia at night; and here, too, was the nightmare of people and things moving aimlessly, always, always moving, moving.

It was bitterly cold; there were no conveyances to be had, and the little lady's knees were trembling. She was shudderingly ill. An old priest, noting her pitiful plight, came mercifully to Cindy's aid. Upon the threshold of the DeSaussure house, the moaning creature collapsed.

"I 'm afraid," said the priest to Mrs. DeSaussure, "that I can't find you a doctor. They 're pretty nearly all gone. But I 'll try. God help us! God help us!" He wrung his hands, and disappeared, running.

No doctor came. But at dawn, in the bare, stripped drawing-room whose hangings and carpets had long since been made into saddlebags, the little boy who was the last of his race opened his huckleberry-blue eyes.

"Poor—little—baby!" murmured his

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young mother faintly. "Poor—poor—little—fatherless—baby! Never, never—to know—*him!*" Two slow, cold tears crept down her white cheeks.

Aline DeSaussure bent over and kissed the child compassionately. This frail old woman, whose diseased heart had rendered her hold upon life purely tentative for many years, had yet, by the irony of fate, survived her stalwart husband, her strong young sons. Over the baby's unconscious head, the two unhappy women looked at each other piteously. Cindy looked at both, and muttered prayers not addressed to the white man's God. That God had come to Cindy along with slavery. Now the opportunity had come to let them both go; the old pagan felt herself free to return to her own gods, the old gods, the bush gods. It was a great relief, as if one removed tormenting tight shoes and stretched at ease one's cramped and aching feet.

That day Columbia, stored with the treas-

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ures of half a State, bursting with loot, was invested. Ominous hours dragged by, leadenly, oppressively, with a sense of inevitable disaster overhanging and imminent. In the middle of the night there arose of a sudden a glare; and then upon all sides sounded the crackle of flames. Bells clanged; dogs began to howl dismally. Shouts arose, and shrill and piercing screams. One heard the frightened crying of children suddenly aroused from sleep. As the flames spread, the light of burning buildings showed unbelievable things, things grotesque and heroic and sometimes terrible.

In the Catholic Church, the orphans, hastily gathered, stood in a huddled group, looking with frightened eyes at the pale, praying sisters, and at the vestmented priest, who addressed with passionate words and gestures certain grim-faced men in alien blue uniforms.

One of these men rapped out an order; the priest cried aloud; and then the children,

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at a word from the sisters, began to move. They hurried out into the frightful din and clamor of the streets, while behind them church and convent began to burn. When the door fell in, one glimpsed statues wrapped and writhing in flame, as the damned in the Florentine's hell. Columbia was a gigantic torch lighting up the black night of war.

When the house on the corner was ablaze and thunderous knocks resounded on the De-Saussure door, Cindy answered the summons.

"Who 's here?" There were bayonets beyond the voice, and Cindy looked upon the group witheringly.

"White women 's hyuh, white men!" said she savagely. "Two uh dem—an' a new-come chile."

"Get 'em out!" was the sharp order. "Get 'em out—or they 'll burn with the house!"

Already the intruders were trampling through the rooms. They helped them-

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selves, rather whimsically, one thought, to whatever caught their fancy; the owner looked on silently, with that disdainful and desperate calmness with which intrepid souls face fate.

The baby and his mother were carried out, on a cot hastily piled with such coverlets as could be snatched up, and set down in the nearest clear space, a small square brilliantly lighted by the burning house on the corner. The woman, who was extremely weak, had lapsed into a merciful unconsciousness, but the baby squirmed and cried. Mrs. DeSaussure, bareheaded, and with a worsted shawl about her thin shoulders, sank down beside them. It was piercingly cold, and in the grip of a bitter frost the torn and trampled streets were like iron, over which swept a cruel February wind.

Toward dawn the woman on the cot opened her eyes.

"C-Cindy!"

"Yes, missis. Yes, chile."

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"I 'm—I 'm going." Her stiff blue lips formed the words with difficulty, but her eyes besought. "Promise—you 'll take the baby—back home—to Linden. *Oh! God! God!*"

From a near-by street had come a hoarse and confused murmur of many voices. Men in soiled uniforms tramped into sight. Capering negroes, shouting, laughing, clapping, accompanied them. And of a sudden the black people burst into an exultant and measured singing:

"B-ab-y-lon 's a-fallin'! B-ab-y-lon 's a-fallin'!
An' de dar-kies gwine ter oc-cu-py de lan'!"

Bitten through by the teeth of the fire, the walls of the majestic old house on the corner crashed down with a roar. Wild chant and wilder figures swept by.

The little lady was shaken, head to foot, with a long, slow shudder. A deep, deep sigh escaped from her bosom, and her head, crowned with very heavy, bright hair, fell

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forward. Mrs. DeSaussure presently drew the sheet up over her face. Under Cindy's shawl, held close to her flat black breast for greater warmth, the baby mewed with cat-like plaintiveness.

The DeSaussure house had been adding its quota of illumination. As they crouched upon the ground beside the cot, the two watchers could see flames leap upward from its roof. When the roof fell in, Aline DeSaussure moaned. It had sheltered generations; it had covered her young wifehood, her lads' childhood.

Presently, detaching itself from a chaotic background of smoke and flame, there came a figure, clapping its hands, staring, screaming with staccato laughter. Now she minced and bowed, smiling horribly, with bitten lips. A torn velvet robe hung about her, soiled and disheveled. She flung up her hands, and, catching the unbound black hair that streamed about her, tore it, and laughed and laughed and laughed. Vainly clutching at

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the flying, fantastic figure, which always lightly eluded her, stumbled and panted a fat black mammy, calling with endearing and coaxing tenderness upon her stark nursling.

Aline DeSaussure looked with wide and anguished eyes upon the terrible and tragic figure, but a little while since the honored, the beloved, the beautiful; and it seemed to her that Carolina herself, distraught, ruined Carolina, went by in the wind of the madwoman's passing. She uttered a lamentable cry; her hands flew to her heart, rent by a mortal pang; and, as if to shut from her sight that poignant vision, her eyes closed.

Cindy lifted her to the cot and drew the sheet over both women, who were so slim that they did not crowd each other on its one pillow. The black woman stood looking down upon them reflectively.

"Ain't scared uh dem white folkses' God no mo'. Not me!" she grumbled.

An hour or so later, at a cabin in the

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outside country, Cindy got some milk for the well-nigh famished baby. Her evil aspect, and the significant bag now openly worn about her neck, commandeered respect —and necessities. But she was warned that not only season and weather, but ruin, starvation, and soldiers, lay between herself and Linden.

Cindy smiled awesomely.

"I done got powerful spell tuh lan' dis chile home," she confided. "He natchelly *'bleeged* tuh git home. Uh-huh! I done call muh own ol' big black god clean f'um Afficky 'count uh dis hyuh same chile." She paused, and added, with dark impressiveness: "Would n't like ter be de pusson tarrygatin' *him-all!*"

With the speck of humanity snuggled in her shawl, Cindy set out.

What was given willingly, she repaid with charms; what was not, she took—when there was anything to take. If milk was procurable, Cindy nosed it out with a truffle-

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hound's flair. But far too often there was no milk; then the child fed upon teas made from simples gathered by the roadside, or for days at a time he lived upon corn meal boiled into a very thin gruel. By all the fancied laws of hygiene he should have succumbed. He grew.

At night, in some lonely thicket under the open sky, the witch woman would squat upon her heels beside a small fire of crossed sticks and with a palmful of earth and another of water would mutter spells over his bald, innocent head. If there were any powers Cindy failed to call to his aid, it was because she had never heard of them; and Cindy was a witch doctor's daughter.

Once, indeed, she had dared to call Names that filled even her rock-ribbed heart with cold, awful fear. That, however, had happened upon a most auspicious occasion, in the full of the moon, and when she had captured one of the last few cocks left in Carolina—a black cock, young and perfect. For these

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Names must never be uttered unless one has a black cock's blood to offer. They will come then to eat the smell of the blood, and also because of certain prayers and words. Now if they are to be petitioned to grant their favor and protection to, say, a young child, that child must be laid mother naked upon Mother Earth between Father Fire and Sister Water. And his skin must be pricked a certain number of times, until drops of blood appear. Three times, then, shall the Names be named, with the Word of each for a sign. And then—if they are pleased—they will put upon that child their spell—and Earth and Fire and Water shall never harm him—and all his life people must love him and serve him. It is a very good spell for any child to have put upon him.

When one is burdened with a young and lusty baby for whom food must be foraged far and wide over a war-swept country-side, one's progress is necessarily slow, particularly when one is past fourscore, and over-

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driven old legs and lungs show signs of wearing out. The indomitable old woman, despite all obstacles, had made each week's end find her a little nearer to Linden. But one evening at sundown she felt herself suddenly fail, as an old horse fails in harness.

It was long past dark when Cindy reached the nearest shelter, a cabin set down at the edge of a swamp. In the incredibly old, wrinkled, and palsied man who opened the door, the conjure woman recognized one of her own calling, and sighed with relief. *They* had not failed her yet; she had found in her extremity the very help she stood most in need of.

Long, long into the night, while the baby slept peacefully upon a bed of gunny-sacks, Cindy and the old man communed. Presently Sally, one of his two granddaughters, was called in, and upon a tuft of the black cock's feathers, dipped in blood and tied with a seven-knotted string, the scared girl was made to swear that she would take the baby

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home to Linden when Cindy was gone. Cindy, in fact, had managed to stay only long enough thus to settle her affairs to the best of her ability. So the baby passed into the slack hands of strange negroes.

They were very kind to him; negroes are, as a rule, kind to children. But in that parlous time, with a cabinful of hungry children and no men to help them, the women had neither means nor time to send the child forward, much as they would have liked to obey their grumbling old grandfather's repeated urgings.

In the meantime the child slept beside the youngest black baby in an over-crowded cabin; and presently he was learning to walk, by the simple process of getting up when he fell down and falling down when he got up, with many an unnoticed bump and bawl between. He grew fat and rosy on corn-meal mush and bacon grease eaten from a tin plate with a mouth-stretching iron spoon. The many little negroes taught him

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early to talk. He was not a year old when he would lisp his name—Linden. Cindy had so insistently mentioned Linden that they named him thus; he had no other name. On the whole, he fared, perhaps, as well as most babies fared just then in war-worn Carolina.

Through the big teamster who just then caught her fancy, Sally at last saw her chance to keep her troublesome promise. The teamster, in the employ of the Union forces, had seen the unravaged and prosperous North, and he wished Sally to go thither with him. Colored Canaan did not lie in the South. Zeke knew the men who were coming home—in rags and tags, battered, scattered, maimed and halt and in driblets—*but who were coming home.* And he rather thought he would prefer to be somewhere else for a while. Sally was quite willing to go; but first she must fulfil the promise wrung from her by her baleful old grandfather and the black witch with the red eyes

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and gorilla teeth. If she did not do what they had made her swear to do—*and that big, awful old woman came up out of the swamp some night—with all those teeth—*

Zeke hastily agreed that Sally had better keep her word; it is very unsafe to meddle with witches' doings. When his job of hauling timber for the Government was finished, and the last money collected, they two would take the child back to Linden and then turn their faces northward.

Linden, however, no longer belonged to the baby; for, by one of those summary military transfers common in conquered provinces, it had been declared confiscated, and so passed into the strong hands of John MacLean.

Full of a fierce and fiery faith—and full of Scotch-Irish prejudice and obstinacy as well—John had seen in the South a field ripe for a great spiritual harvest, and had laid aside the gun to arm himself with the gospel. Having valiantly helped to free en-

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slaved bodies, he started in just as valiantly and as stubbornly to free enslaved souls.

In that country of wrecked plantations, of ruined rice-fields and roofless houses, calm Linden, fronting the bright May River, pleased him. Save that it bore sad evidences of marauders and that a great deal of the fine furniture had been either broken or stolen outright, the house was intact. Once in secure possession, John settled down to what he meant to make his life-work, and called in the light-hearted, sensuous colored people to drink deep of the cold well of orthodox Calvinism. They were appreciative: they wished to please the white man who offered them, for the mere taking, Thirty-nine unbreakable Articles; but they found the well-water unpleasant to the palate and—slyly made a sieve of the dipper.

He opened for the colored children a school, in the stately dining-room from whose walls arrogant patricians looked out of splendid frames; the room's marble

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mantel bore their carved escutcheon; beneath which one read: "*Ad Astra.*" John thought that such stars as these slave-holding gentry had looked to were evil ones. He smiled to see their painted semblances look down helplessly upon the sons and daughters of Ham learning their A B abs in the room of their feastings; and his dour humor was tickled at the contrast between the grinning little negroes and the fine, gay, bare-bosomed ladies, with slim, pointed fingers that had never toiled and slim necks one might think would break under the weight of heads crammed with such damnable pride.

He was very hopeful. When he saw his dusky audience swaying like barley in the breeze of his words of sound counsel, John MacLean felt himself glimpsing the mountain peaks of coming Canaan, rising, rosy-pink, in the dawn. He was as yet unaware of the neat holes bored in his gospel-gourd.

When he did finally begin to be aware of the nature and extent of the leakage, he

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was seized with stern, wrathful impatience. It was very difficult for him to view the subject in any clear perspective. He had been at first too far off; and now, being too near, he put his eye against the object he wished to study and so blinded himself. One could wish that all reformers should take a preliminary course in optics.

Why should a race be so childishly frivolous, behave with such naked and unshamed untruthfulness, at so great a turning-point in its career? Perhaps, he reflected, it was because they had not as yet been taught their value as human beings,—free human beings, with a part, and that no mean part, to play in the world. Yes, that must be it. John began to teach them their great value as human beings, very persistently and insistently.

But if black faces beamed approval, when he went abroad among his new neighbors white faces looked upon him with a cold and hostile contempt. He had come in their most evil hour, and he had been allied with

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those forces which had crushed the South. Therefore they judged him even as they were judged by him. They were engaged in the most frightful struggle in which any people can engage,—the struggle to preserve the integrity and purity of a race in the midst of a world turned topsy-turvy. They neither asked nor desired outside help or counsel; they insisted upon their inherent right to manage their own affairs in their own way. And it was in order to do this that they had of late called into being a force born of desperation and duty—the Klan—against which John MacLean thundered without fear, but not without fanged and ravening reproach.

John could no more understand that movement than the men behind it could understand *him*. With flashing eyes and compressed lips he had listened to dark and wild tales, to whispered, fearful confidences, to terrified comments.

Of the seed that burned bravely at market

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crosses, fell singing fighting hymns on lonesome moors, starved unwhimpering in forgotten dungeons,—he was devoid of fear. A man of his hands, his utmost Christianity could not keep his blood from kindling joyously to a rousing battle. He had no faintest notion of counseling meekness. Bareheaded, on the front steps of Linden, he called the colored country-side around him and advised them to get guns and to use them. For himself, he said disdainfully, he had no tinge of fear; and he asked them to remember that for such a cause as this had his old friend John Brown died at Charlestown.

They left Linden glory-hallelujahing; it was John MacLean's gauntlet thrown down openly for all members of the outlaw Klan to see.

The Klan watched silently. And presently they decided that they had most grievous ground of complaint against this can-

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tankerous carpet-bagger; a fact perfectly well known to Mr. MacLean, who, like a particularly bad-tempered St. George in conflict with a particularly devilish dragon, honed up the tongue of denunciation accordingly.

And, while the storm lowered over Linden, and the cruel, bleak winter of direst want and woe drew near to one of those sad, sad Christmases after the war, Zeke and Sally, with the little boy between them, were journeying homeward by ox-cart express. The baby was simply and chastely clad in a parti-colored shift worn next to his grimy skin, a man's old coat with the sleeves rolled up to allow his small arms free play, and a battered and shapeless felt hat pulled down over his ears in the effective fashion of an extinguisher. Of shoes he had none. Cindy's bag, sewed up in a very dirty piece of calico, was tied about his neck; and his cheeks—such as one might glimpse of them

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under the enshrouding headgear—bore upon them etchings done in wet points of bread and molasses.

On Christmas Eve, in a chill and dreary twilight, they left the ox-cart in a thicket and entered the path that leads through the pines to Linden. Wet, swaying pendants of trailing moss, hanging from the huge oaks that interspersed the pines, brushed against them with a clammy and ghostly touch. Zeke and Sally, both nervous and silent, were filled with exaggerated fears. All along the long road, terrible and wild stories had been whispered, filling tellers and listeners alike with apprehension.

They breathed deep with relief when at last Linden lay before them, dark, quiet deserted, with closed doors and windows, and light showing in one room only. Stepping noiselessly upon the pillared porch, Zeke swung the sleeping baby off his shoulder and plumped him down with his back against the closed door. Linden had come home.

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The baby was quite used to cold and darkness, but not at all used to being left alone and supperless. He called softly: "Thally! Thally!" But "Thally" did not come back. His lip trembled; tears filled his eyes; the vague, formless fear of aloneness assailed him, and lifting up his voice he cried loudly.

The door was hastily opened by a big, fair, bearded man who held a candle in one hand and shaded his keen blue eyes with the other. The bundle of rags upon the threshold waited no further invitation than the opened door, but trotted into the hall, his small bare feet pattering on the uncovered floor. A sleeve of the coat unrolled and flapped beside him emptily, grotesquely.

Whether the outlandish waif were black or white John could not for the moment tell; in truth, it mattered little, all children being dear to him. He ushered his small visitor into a room warm with fire and candlelight, and removed the evil odored coat, the shape-

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less hat. Periwinkle eyes, white brow, gold hair, revealed themselves.

"And where will *you* be from?" John wondered.

"Thally gone. Thally leave Linden," said the baby gravely, shaking his head over Thally's defection.

"And who 's Sally, now?"

But the child had imparted all the information at his command. Sally was Sally, and Sally had gone and left him. He patted the big man's hand to make him understand.

The big man was absurdly grateful for that friendly, light touch. He had been feeling most horribly alone; he had, in all truth, felt that same vague horror of aloneness which had made the child cry out at his door. The house was quite deserted, save for himself, the cook having gone into Blufton for the night, on Christmas business of her own. But the emptiness that John recognized was not so much in the house as in

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The bundle of rags on the threshold waited no further invitation

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himself, the inevitable result of social ostracism.

The Bible opened at random, which he had been reading when the cry at his door interrupted him, had given him for his pains the lugubrious eighty-eighth:

> **Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them. . . .**
>
> **Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, *and* mine acquaintance into darkness.**

The words stung him. For he was most absolutely cut off from his kind, a thing calamitous for a white man. The evil, greedy carpet-baggers exploiting ignorant ex-slaves, making of them political pawns upon the bloody chess-board of the South, filled him with a stern disgust and anger; and he viewed the ex-slaves' former owners very much as, say, a biblical Jew might have viewed Baal worshipers overthrown, hewed hip and thigh by the sword of the Lord and

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of Gideon. He said, therefore, in substance:

"Gentlemen, I am everybody's enemy."

And they replied unanimously: "For this, be anathema."

And already the light, volatile natures, the easy, pilfering morality, the irresponsible, gay inconsequence of the pupils and protégés for whom he labored had begun to chafe and fret his own honest and truthful nature. He had no thought, however, of giving up a fight just begun. But to keep him sweet he needed communion with his equals.

That the wee visitor, come mysteriously out of the dusk of Christmas Eve, should be a white child touched him curiously and tenderly. Blood is thicker than water. He did not love the black babies less but the white baby more.

Moreover, the white baby was looking at him with starry eyes full of the sweetest trust and friendliness. And John did so greatly need trust and friendliness just then. One

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may have very, very, very little, and still not be without some inward and sure staff of comfort and of hope; but, oh, to be alone and hated, without love, without intelligent sympathy, without friendliness—on Christmas Eve!

The childless man felt his heart melt in his bosom, remembering old, tender stories of that dear Baby of the Star, who at times delights to reveal himself to sad men on pilgrimage; and always in the guise of the beggar and of the lowly whom he loved.

On the table, beside the big Bible, stood the remains of John's supper. The child pointed to it eagerly, for he was very hungry.

"Linden wan' thuppeh."

Linden! Why, the child's name was Linden! What a pleasant and curious coincidence!

Having supped, the baby yawned, looking about him for a good spot to curl up and go to sleep, like a puppy with a full stomach.

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He decided upon the hearthrug. But John's bachelor neatness and cleanliness were scandalized at the bare idea of any human creature going to sleep anywhere in such a shocking state of grime. He wished that Viny, the cook, were there to help him; but she was not, and John rolled up his sleeves and set himself seriously to the task, fearsome to any man, of getting a thoroughly dirty child thoroughly clean. The one discolored garment made him shudder, as he consigned it to the fire. Cindy's bag was laid upon the table for later investigation, and he handled it as gingerly as if he had seen the old black woman mumbling her spells with its aid.

Linden enjoyed the warm water hugely. He splashed and shouted and laughed, and grabbed at the soap, and worried the washrag; and he howled only when John, with more zeal than deftness, soaped his eyes and mouth. It was a drastic scouring, but there presently emerged from it a sweet and rosy

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cherub, hard to be recognized as the dirty little grub of an hour since.

When he had been trussed in an undershirt by way of a nighty, and the room decently put to order again, Master Linden decided that the nice big man should sing him "nighty-night"; he stood on tiptoes to be taken up and rocked.

"Thing by-bye," he urged, settling himself comfortably in the crook of a big arm, and the big arm that was all too empty closed about him hungrily, instinctively, God having made all big arms for the great purpose of cuddling soft, snuggling little bodies. An inexpressible, exquisite sense of fatherhood welled up in John's heart. He pressed his face down against the damp curls. He began to sing:

"God rest you, merry gentlemen! Let nothing you dismay.
For Jesus Christ our Saviour was born on Christmas Day."

The baby, with half-closed eyes, crooned a tuneless tune to the fire, his hand patting

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John's arm. Then he went to sleep in the arms of the man who had taken his inheritance, and was held close and lovingly. Reluctantly John laid him down upon the sofa and covered him with a blanket brought from his own bed.

He had time then to examine the extremely dirty little bag tied with knotted string, and to marvel at the unchancy plunder it contained. But he whistled when, from the midst of the conjure stuff, there came to light the rings Cindy had taken from a dead hand. With them was a man's very handsome and heavy gold watch-fob, stamped with a coat of arms—the same arms blazoned upon the marble mantels and over the great doors of Linden. John stared at the jewel almost unbelievingly. Then he stole over and looked long and earnestly upon the sleeping baby, and saw how race and breeding marked every lovely line of him. John knew him now, bone of the bone and blood of the blood of those proud pa-

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tricians whose portraits still hung upon the walls of their despoiled home, men and women allied to the lordliest names of England and of France. Eh, but this was a bonny baby! In his secretest heart the dour, doughty Puritan adored his strength and grace and comeliness.

When he had taken over Linden for the glory of the Lord, John had heard, of course, of the little widow and her flight to Columbia; also he knew that there had been an heir expected. But the little widow was dead, and no one had heard of any child surviving. Yet—here he was!

Who had brought him home, or why, or how, John never knew; but he was quite, quite sure Who had sent him, and he had no thought of refusing the heavenly gift. He would have thought such a refusal sacrilegious, he who saw the hand of the Almighty in all his affairs, shaping his destiny and guiding his days. With all humility and willingness and gratitude, he took over

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his new stewardship and all that it implied. He sat by the fire, and, full of a happy awe, dreamed and planned. There was a far, fair future in which he and this child, viewing the great work they should do together, might, too, say reverently: "What hath God wrought!" He smiled; he was no longer alone.

His Christmas present presently stirred in his sleep, woke, and sat up.

"Wanterjinkerwater!" said he plaintively. "Dimmyjinkerwater!"

Vain of the delightful fact that he so readily understood this angelic lingo, John got the water, eager to wait fatherlily upon his child. The little man drank slowly, with long and deliberate pauses between little sips. Then he stuck his fat fingers in the glass, paddled them, laughed, and looked up at John with bright, mischievous eyes.

And even then sheeted figures were dismounting from sheeted horses before the pillared porch of Linden. They moved

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soundlessly, as might the phantoms they resembled, and their appearance, in that lonely place and hour, was such as froze the blood. Under the tall leader's hand the great hall door swung open, for in his surprise at the child's entrance John had forgotten to draw the bolts. Soundlessly they moved down the wide hall toward the room from which light issued. The leader opened this door, too.

Candles and firelight dancing on the walls; upon the table nothing worse than bread and milk and an open bible. And John himself, kneeling, smiling fatherlily upon a rosy and roguish elf who paddled in a glass of water and laughed gleefully.

The child saw them first, and gasped. At that John looked up and knew his fate was upon him. Rage shook him head to foot, and he would have rushed upon them, unarmed as he was, but—one could not endanger a child's life in such a mêlée of killing as must ensue. He got to his feet and faced

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them, disdaining words, without a trace of fear, but with eyes blazing with bitter contempt. Twenty pairs of eyes cold with condemnation looked back at him, the carpet-bagger, the preaching fire-brand, the enemy. The tall leader beckoned, an imperious and menacing gesture. John shrugged his shoulders, a grim, scornful smile curling his lips.

"So much mummery for one lone man's murder!" said he, bitingly.

Something in that tense, electric atmosphere troubled the young child's spirit. He slipped off the sofa, and as the big undershirt tripped him, and John, with a quick gesture, stooped to raise him, the little man gripped the big one with warm, moist fingers. He frowned disapprovingly at the things in the doorway.

"Go 'way, boogermans!" he ordered, with pretty imperiousness. "Go 'way!"

When the boogermans failed to go, the baby wished John to take him up in his arms. But John shook his head regretfully. His

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brows puckered then as the problem of the child's fate presented itself. He looked about desperately, praying for an inspiration for the child's sake. Then, holding up his hand impressively, he addressed the tall leader, and told of the child's coming, of what Cindy's bag contained.

But the baby himself, after vainly twitching his friend's trouser leg, began to roar dismally, with the fearless lack of restraint that is a baby's most potent weapon. John and his visitors looked at one another, not so much with hate as with perplexity. There was a thing to be done; but, in the doing, what of the baby?

"And *you're* of his kin and his race!" spat John, with sudden exasperation. "Christmas Eve—and an innocent roused from his sleep to witness murder! Could you find no fitter time for your devil's prankjankins than the birth-night of the Lord?"

Nobody answered. In sheer desperation,

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John went on his knees to comfort the wailing child, and as the baby strangled his sobs on the big man's breast, they in the door looked on through the slits of forty eyeholes.

"If you can dare to handle innocence with bloody hands—if there 's one among you that 's a father—take the child home to some woman to-night, for the love of God!" said John. And gently he put the child aside. "It goes sore against my grain to part with you, my bonny man," he said softly and regretfully. "I looked to be a father to you. But the will of God be done! Never yet did John MacLean gainsay a decree of his Maker. And in my Maker's name I beseech my murderers to deal fairly with you after I am done away with, and to put you into possession of what must be yours. Stay!"

He fished a stubby pencil from his pocket, drew a chair to the table, seated himself calmly, and on the fly-leaf of his Bible made his brief will, leaving Linden to the child.

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When he had signed and dated it, he rose and nodded.

"That will make it surer," said he, with a satisfied smile.

And all the while the baby, refusing to be lightly put aside, clutched at his knees, protesting against such neglectful treatment with raised, tearful eyes and heartbroken sobs.

"And now," said John to his gentlemen-in-waiting, "there is but one thing more." He fished a handful of small change from his pocket, bowed to them, and laid the money on the table. "You will be so kind," he said politely, "as to buy with this some little baubles to please him? It's Christmas, remember—Christmas! I think it would ease me in my extremity to remember I had made the wee thing happy on Christmas!" He straightened his shoulders at that, and his head went up. "And now I 'm ready," said he calmly.

Once more he had to put aside the clutch-

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ing little hands as he bent to kiss the child's fair head. With a firm and manly tread, he walked toward the men, who were already moving through the hall. The door shut upon the baby's wails.

"God forefend he 'll set himself on fire!" said John anxiously. "You might hurry," he suggested as they stepped upon the porch.

Night hung over the dark earth, wet with rain and sweet with woodsy odors. Above the dim, slim pines clouds scurried about, trying to clear a space in the sky for a few timid Christmas stars. One caught, too, the salty sweetness of the tide-water. John drew a deep, deep breath, filling his lungs with it.

At the foot of the steps, ghostly horses drifted up to meet ghostly riders. Their movements were very deliberate.

"And the child alone with fire!" snarled John, and stamped his feet.

The tall leader spoke in a slow, low voice, and instantly the men mounted and began

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to move off. From the house came a muffled cry, and John sucked his teeth sympathetically. Dear baby,—so bright and brave and beautiful, so loving and loyal and like the Holiest Baby of all—good night, good night, and good-by!

The masked horsemen, drifting into the shadows of the pines, melted into the night. Then the leader drew near and laid a firm hand upon his captive's shoulder.

"Ah can't spare any of my men to-night to tend babies,—not even white babies," he remarked in a soft, pleasant voice. "Did n't reckon *you* ever had time to tend babies—white babies—either." He paused meditatively. "Ah don't believe," he murmured, "Ah don't believe that God A'mighty was just projeckin' when He sent that little chap hyuh to-night of all nights to you of all men. No, suh, Ah don't believe it! Aftuh you 've had him a spell—and learned to use yo' white man's eyes, you everlastin' fool, you—you 'll understand it 's because of him and

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his mothuh and his sistuh—that the Klan 's hyuh."

He walked down the steps and swung a lithe leg over his mount.

"If Ah were you, Ah 'd go on back in the house and keep that little chap from burstin' himself cryin'," he said casually.

Once in the saddle, he leaned forward and waved a slim, capable hand—such a hand as had gripped by the hair of its drowning head the safety of a race and held it alive above a black flood. A note of amused and tolerant understanding, of a new respect and kindness, crept into his soft, dangerous voice.

"*Merry Christmas!*" said he, genially, and was off.

John's throat, which had not tightened at the thought of a rope collar, felt of a sudden a big, aching lump crowd into it. He swallowed tolerance and understanding gulpingly; the underlying kindness helped them go down—and stay down.

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"M-merry Christmas!" he found himself stammering.

And as the flying horseman vanished, he ran back to the warm and lighted room and gathered the weeping spirit of Christmas into fatherly and consoling arms.

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THE LITTLE BROWN HOUSE

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THE LITTLE BROWN HOUSE

THE senator's wife was returning from the very smartest of afternoon affairs; her white-haired and fresh-colored loveliness had charmed and delighted the most famous and fastidious of diplomats, and the Chinese minister had expressed frank amaze at the magical youthfulness of the American Grandmother; as she stepped into her car the magically youthful rose still blew in her cheeks.

To avoid a crush, her chauffeur had made a detour, swung down two or three residential streets, slipped through the region of fashionable boarding-houses, and turned into a side street, quiet, tree-shaded, peaceful, as if, like the birds, it were going to bed with the sun. On a corner, with a hedge between it and another small house next door, stood the Little Brown House.

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The chauffeur was n't speeding then, so the senator's wife had a chance really to see the place. It was quite as if the Little Brown House had seen her first, and called out friendlily, as one may to one's own.

She came out of her pleasant self-satisfaction with a start; as usual she had been telling herself that she had n't failed *him;* that step by step she had kept the pace set by his boundless ambition. An international figure now, the West had hammered him out of her giant forge—one of those wonderful Americans about whom, some day in the far future, not the Great American Novel alone, but the greatest epic of the entire race is going to be written. Not the least of his successes was the fact that for forty years he had retained the single love and adoration of his wife; she was proud of him with an almost terrible pride.

There had been times when she had wanted to pause, and catch breath, and rest; but always he had been marching upward,

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and she had gone with him. Once she had thought that afterward—when, say, the children had grown up and settled—they two might grow peacefully and gently old together, in the evening of their day. But that dream had been foregone; she had but grown old youthfully, wonderfully, with a ripening beauty. Now it was only at times, when, disrobed and massaged, she was at last alone, that she admitted she was—tired.

Her social secretary—and *she* knew her social centers like the palm of her hand—said that the senator's new house was the one perfect house in all America, and those affairs at which his wife presided the most delightful outside of Vienna. She never knew that, deep down in the other woman's soul weariness, a longing for simpler things, stung at times like a nettle.

But when her car rolled slowly by the Little Brown House something broke in her breast; something became alive and fluttered as with wings. Why, it was just such a lit-

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tle house as she had dreamed of, always, in her secretest dreams! It was a pity, she thought, that a great "For Sale" sign was nailed on the front porch, and that all the windows were closed. Little brown houses should never, never be spoiled by "For Sale" signs, and their windows should always be open.

She was going to dine at the White House that night, in a Paris gown, wearing the pearls that the senator had lately given her. And—she would come home weary. She wished that for just one night out of these gold-and-glory public nights they two might linger over a small table whose simple meal was lighted by the lamp of home. Oh, just for once to be only a gray-haired man and his gray-haired wife, in life's calm closing day, looking steadfastly out into the fading sky, in whose deepening twilight would presently shine, like a beacon, the evening star! No light save that, and the bedtime candle; no noise, no glitter; no great orchestra, only

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Why, it was just such a little house as she had dreamed of!

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the dear every-day music of the tea-kettle, and the cricket, and the settling log.

The car swung around a corner; the Little Brown House was left behind. She had left behind so much, she thought. Old neighbors, old faiths, old friends, old simplicities. She had advanced, but to what? What, of all the great essentials, had she gained? In all this success, what was hers—to *keep?*

At dinner she met her youngest daughter, married to a title incidental to a big blond Englishman of unimpeachable morals and a goodly rent-roll. The other daughter, Milly, had married the millions of Kilian van Cuypt. Dick, the only son, had married a virtually penniless Virginian, but Dick's wife brought connections. The children had all done well: she was satisfied with things as they were; but at dawn she admitted again that she was tired, too tired to sleep.

The Little Brown House crept into her mind soothingly. In the room shaded by

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that one great tree the lights would long since have been out. That would be a very simple room; the toilet articles would n't be of crystal and of hammered gold, for instance; there would be no inlaid and priceless furniture: it would be just dear and clean and cozy; after a quiet day one might pass there a quieter night.

She wondered what it would be like, living in a little brown house. Whimsically she lay awake and furnished it, room by room. At first she failed to note the significance of her omissions, the curious sense of rest and freedom which the mere thought of eliminating a great retinue of servants gave her. Little brown houses have n't room for retinues; one had perhaps a little maid whom one really knew, and in whose affairs one was interested. It occurred to her that she knew just about as much of the lives of *her* servants as she knew about the man in the moon. But in little brown houses one might come into pleasant human

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contact with one's few necessary helpers. She surmised that this was the right way, the good way, the Galilean Carpenter's way.

The Carpenter!

Her thoughts drifted back to her girlhood's churchgoing, the churchgoing of people in little homes, who have sometimes not enough, sometimes just enough, but never, oh never, too much. Of a sudden she remembered her mother's sweet untrained soprano, her father's stern bass:

"Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!"

And her mother had had but one best cashmere; her father a sacred suit, religiously laid out on the bed of a Sunday morning!

There had been Wednesday-night prayer-meetings; she had gone, a little, little girl, holding tight to the hired girl's hard, kind hand. She wondered, with a tightening of the heart, what had become of Martha. Perhaps she was some gray-haired grand-

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mother to-night; perhaps Martha too slept under the stars and the night wind and the grass, in a corner of that old cemetery wherein, lying very close together, her own father and mother rested.

How calm and serene those two time-worn faces had been! The simplicity of their lives and their faith seemed to make a deeper gulf between her and them than death or years. As in a dream she remembered the quavering voice of their oldest friend reading over them:

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . the love of God, . . . the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. . . ."

Ah, but to them these things had been the real and the essential—"the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." To her they had been for many a year but empty echoes, to which one listened, if one listened at all, with polite inattention and unemotion.

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And then she thought with astonishment, "Why, perhaps *they* succeeded, who held fast to things they were never to lose; perhaps it is *we* who fail—we who have only the things we can touch with our hands." In her carved and lace-hung bed, which had cost more than all the furniture in her father's house, she began to weep softly; but as if those tears had cleared her vision she saw what she might do.

The senator was more than scrupulous about his wife's more than liberal allowance; it was a very easy matter for her to purchase the Little Brown House. Never, she thought, had the mere possession of any one thing given her so much pure pleasure.

It was n't, however, the sort of house you can furnish by a wholesale order at the nearest furniture store. No, indeed; you have to hunt carefully for things to put into little brown houses. Piece by piece the senator's wife found her belongings: here an old dresser, there an old chair or an older table;

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all good and solid and beautiful, with the beauty of being *lived with.*

She was tired of the pitiless bright glare of electricity; so on her dining-table stood a softly shaded family lamp. The sort of lamp *you* used to sit beside once, long ago, while your brother and your sister studied their lessons near by, and your mother, a stocking of yours on her hand, looked up, smiling, from time to time to answer your many questions; and your father twinkled over his glasses and his paper at all of you. You remember now, don't you? You would n't take anything life might offer, for just that memory, would you? And is n't it strange that, looking back at them now that they 've gone, just these simplest memories seem somehow the holiest?

Upstairs the bedrooms, all in freshest dimity, and smelling of lavender and rosemary, begged you to come in and lie down and rest a while. And you did n't need to look at the Unrevised Version on a stand by

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the bed to know that they were rooms you could *pray* in. On the wall in the front room hung, in a blackened frame, a sampler, a nice moral sampler, with an edging of painfully prim flowers, "Work'd by Anne Alice Hardy, Aged 12 Yrs." Anne Alice was the senator's wife's mother; and the sampler had lain for years at the bottom of a trunk, because, among the notable pictures on the walls of the great new house, there was n't room for anything so crude.

When with loving exactitude the Little Brown House of dreams had been wrought into reality the senator's wife drew a long breath of relief. She said with a smile and a sigh:

"Now I need flowers, and a cat, and a canary, and a friend."

Getting flowers, and a cat, and a canary do not present difficulties; getting a friend does. The senator's wife knew exactly what she wanted; she knew that the Little Brown House must spell happiness, and home, and

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hope to any who were to dwell therein.

Face after face flitted through her mind, to be dismissed. The social secretary? *She* despised little brown houses! The senator's wife began to wonder if, perhaps, people do not build great houses more to please social secretaries, and visitors, and butlers, and footmen, and maids, than to live and be happy in themselves!

Apply to the pastor of her church? But he too was one for whom the bigger houses are built. Her friends? Fashionable friends are—acquaintances. They would smile to one another, with lifted eyebrows, over their bridge-tables, if they knew.

Her husband? Never, never, never he: he was with all his heart and soul a man of his times; never was he to know that the high place he had coveted and won for her was n't her ideal realized.

The Little Brown House remained closed, and dark at night when a friendly light should have streamed through its windows.

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Every time she walked through its homy rooms—rooms which seemed to be complaining of not being allowed to be home—the Little Brown House asked reproachfully:

"You who have so much, have n't you one, just one real friend you can share my simple secret with? Why, those you regard as utter failures can call in friend and neighbor to share their joys and sorrows! Do you know why? Because Just-Enough, and more often Not-Enough, draw folks together brotherlily; but Too-Much cuts you off from your kind.

"Why do you come, senator's wife, to me, who am only a little brown house, and keep me empty? You must share me—or leave me!"

Among her charities were several Homes for women—women that have n't any homes of their own, and that nobody on earth wants in theirs. Her name figured on their lists of patronesses and on their many boards. And while the social secretary attended to all the

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mere business details, and she had but to sign the necessary checks, she made it a rule to appear at each annual function, exquisitely gowned, smiling, affable, a being from another sphere almost.

The price that one insensibly pays for Too-Much is that one insensibly forgets one is just folks; the whole great toiling wonderful terrible race becomes to one—the common people. Just as if all that has been created in our common universe had n't been made by our common God for His common people!

The senator's wife, naturally enough, had drifted into this common error. It was n't that she did n't feel kindly; why, she wished to help—with checks. But she simply could n't imagine that people who had nothing at all could be just like herself. So she had never looked at any one face among all these faces to know it from its fellows: these were just the faces of old women in Homes.

It was only because the Little Brown

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House was so insistent in its demands, making her thoughtful, that she found herself watching at one of these sad receptions the strong, serene face of Anne O'Driscoll. Moved by a sudden impulse, she approached the middle-aged woman, who was looking about her with the merry courage of Irish eyes.

"I hope," she began, "that you 're happy here?"

Anne O'Driscoll's voice had n't the usual complacent sureness of the grateful reply.

"My two eyes," said she, after a pause, "went back on me last winter, an' I could sew no more. I 'm too old to find payin' work, though I 'm too young, I 'm thinkin', for *this*. But I 'm grateful for the shelter, ma'am, for I 'd been alone and sick."

"Alone and sick!" The sheltered and beloved woman shuddered slightly. "I 'm sorry, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Thank you kindly, ma'am, but I 'm used to it—the being alone—for a good many

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years. An' I'm no Mrs., but just Anne O'Driscoll."

"You are n't unhappy here, at least?"

"I 'd be less so, ma'am, if I 'd the hopes of gettin' work, an' my cat Blinkie back. I minded losin' Blinkie most of all, I think. Ah, he was a fine cat, an' more knowin' than most folks, Blinkie was!"

"And you could n't bring him here? Why, the very idea, wanting and not being able to keep—just a *cat!*"

"Why, ma'am," said Anne gently, "you could n't expect the Home to take you an' your cat too. Just think now, if we 'd all be allowed to bring what we liked with us—this one a cat, and t'other one a dog, and another one a parrot, might be! Oh, no ma'am, it was n't to be expected; so I let Blinkie go to the grocer on the corner's wife, that 'd always wanted him. If you 're to keep things yourself you must have a home that 's yours to keep them in." There

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was n't the faintest trace of bitterness in her voice.

An old woman, plain, unlettered; an old cat that she could n't keep: could anything be more *banal?* But Anne looked something like her own old aunt, her father's sister, dead these many years.

"May I," said the senator's wife, "call you Anne?"

"Why, of course, ma'am, if you like." Anne was neither flustered nor flattered by the great lady's notice, just simply and pleasantly responsive.

"Anne," said the lady after a pause, "Anne, don't you think you 'd like a really, truly home, where you 'd grow old gently and in peace and surety, with enough work to make things worth while, and not enough money to spoil things, and a cushion in the sun for Blinkie, and flowers in the windows —and—somebody else to help, Anne?" Her voice was a bit breathless.

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"There 's women," said Anne softly, "that 's born to ache for a home all their days, an' never do they find nor keep it. I 'm one of 'em."

The senator's wife wondered a little at herself. She had known Anne but a few minutes; Anne was a plain woman, a woman in a Home, and she knew that she was going to tell Anne all about the Little Brown House; and Anne would understand!

"Will you come with me to-morrow, Anne, to see a little brown house that needs somebody—and I think that somebody 's you—to take care of it?"

Over Anne's face fell an autumn fairness of emotion. She lifted humid eyes.

"To-morrow, then!" said the senator's wife, delicate finger on lip. "And remember, it 's a secret, Anne."

She came for Anne in her big new car, and together they went over the Little Brown House. Anne fingered the table-cloths and towels and bed-linen lingeringly, and laid her

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hand on the shining tables with a loving touch.

"You like it, then?" asked the senator's wife. Anne began to cry for answer. And after the senator's wife, seated beside her on the chintz-hung sofa, had explained things, Anne took the white hand in her brown one.

"Dear heart! To think you were like that all along, underneath, an' me thinkin' you were n't anything but just a fine lady!" she wondered. "I 'm thinkin' it 's a grand thing, now, to be a fine lady, because women 's women; that 's all they be—thank God!" She lifted her head, and the other woman saw, not admiration nor flattery nor envy, but love, real love, look at her out of the eyes of a friend.

As they shut the door of the Little Brown House after them, they heard through the open windows of the house next door the painfully measured splashing of "Silvery Waves" spilled over a piano by childish fingers.

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"Why, we've got neighbors!" said the senator's wife gaily. "I'd forgotten *that*. And we're neighbors too, aren't we? Anne, after a while you must send things over on a tray, and we hope they'll be neighborly and just drop in when they can. Isn't it nice, Anne? And after they've called on you, you must tell me all about them. I hope they've got *little children*. We'll give their little girl a doll, and their boy a train of cars, won't we? My little grandson dotes so on trains of cars!"

When she could come, between whiles, she found herself in the midst of a pleasant neighborhood life; and all about her were the soft noises and sights and smells of home. Anne's pride in the place was almost piteous. How clean and sweet it was; how everything was polished, and how it shone and twinkled; but nothing was fussy and not-to-be-used! The neighbors whom she began to meet knew and accepted her as the Lady Who Came to See Anne. They

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did n't wonder she liked to come to see Anne: they liked to come too.

Next door was a mother of six. They had all come over to see Anne, and Blinkie had purred over the baby. Anne had given all of them little cakes that bound them to her forever. She was going to have the whole noisy, hungry, beautiful brood of them once a week to tea. Anne reveled in their company.

"You know," she told the senator's wife, "I 'd never much of a home at best, Miss Barbara, me bein' out all day, workin'. So I 'd no chance of knowin' little children, except I 'd see them on the street, an' have to take out my love o' them in passin'. Why, I 've known me to be happy for a whole long day because a little thing in its carriage waved its hand an' gave me a smile, passin' by. Now, thanks be to God an' you, I 've got a real home, an' a chance to have them about me a bit, though they 're none o' my own. I look forward all week to the time

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they 'll come, an' the noise they 'll make, an' the joy o' them, an' the way they 'll look, an' talk, an' laugh. Miss Barbara, I 'm thinkin' this is the kind of a house that *likes* to have children under its roof; and there 'll be more an' more o' them comin' by an' by. An'—you would n't be mindin' if I called in, one or two at a time, the old women that 's got to stay on in the Home, Miss Barbara? They 're tired, sometimes, of just havin' to keep alive, an' a day here 'd hearten them, maybe. I 'd like to share."

The senator's wife looked about her. It *was* the sort of house that likes to shelter the young and call in the old and the poor for warmth and kindliness.

"Have them all, Anne. And tell me all about it afterward. You dear, dear woman, you!"

"I 'd most forgotten to tell you about the Westerner, had n't I? The lady next door brought him first, Miss Barbara, him bein' a great friend o' the children's. An' he 's the

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clearest-eyed, softest-spoken, brownest-faced man ever I clapped my two eyes on. Right around the corner from us he is, him keepin' house by himself, except for the passel o' men that 's always comin' to set with him. I ain't one for praisin' up men-folks' housekeepin', Miss Barbara; so one day I upped an' sent him a tray—a big heavy one at that, jest to show him! He brought it back himself, him havin' no servant, an' he was that kind an' sociable I took to him like the children do. I like Westerners—they 're so just *themselves*, ain't they? He 's real glad we 're neighbors, he says, an' him an' his friends 'll be glad to be of any service to us. I told him us bein' women-folks an' the best cooks, they 'd better come over an' neighbor with us holidays. The nicest man ever I knew, Miss Barbara—it 's him fixed our kitchen-window shelves."

The senator's wife smiled appreciatively, then went up-stairs for her usual half-hour of quiet thought and rest by that shaded

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window. Outside the day was rather dark, and the tree was bare now to the autumn winds. She sat with her hands in her lap, thoughtfully. The senator had n't been so well of late. He looked, she thought, more gray and old.

"Why, it 's getting so we just see each other going up and down stairs!" she thought indignantly and sorrowfully. "We 're getting old too, Hugh and I are. Oh, it is n't fair, it is n't fair. We are n't even sharing any more—I *can't* share his work, and he *won't* share my house!"

That was perhaps the most strenuous winter either of them had known. They crossed each other's orbits frenziedly. At her affairs he showed his fine worn face for a few dutiful minutes, then disappeared. And when at times they did go out together, the usual tactful hostess, following immemorial custom, separated them.

In the midst of this mad swirl Christmas drew near. To the senator's wife Christ-

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mas had come to mean merely a long list of gifts, dutifully checked over with her secretary: you gave just as you received; you had to. You knew that from the housekeeper down every one in the house must be remembered; the secretary saw to it that they were. There was no planning; no hiding of things half done when somebody came into the room; no mysterious hints nor smiles; no air of subdued eagerness; no tender sacrifices that make gifts doubly precious.

But at the Little Brown House things were different. Anne had made with her own skilful hands something for everybody: for the little Maid Who Helped; for the Mother of Six and her brood; for the old women from the Home; for the Man around the Corner, who was so glad to be neighborly; and for the senator's wife. Anne even had a tree; and they were all to come for a while on Christmas eve, except, perhaps, Miss Barbara.

"I wish," said Anne, looking up from the

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cake she was whisking together, "that you 'd put on your plainest frock, Miss Barbara, and come. It 'd make Christmas more like Christmas as it ought to be for me." Her eyes implored the senator's wife with so much of love and longing that the heart in her warmed anew to Anne.

"The senator and I have simply got to attend our daughter's Christmas Eve reception, but I think, by close management, I *might* get here—from half-past six until nearly nine, say. And I could drive home and dress, and nobody be the wiser for my pleasantest Christmas secret!" She thought for a moment, and laughed like a girl: "Anne, I 'm coming!"

The senator was to accompany her to their daughter's. She knew that until then she would n't see him; she knew, too, that some beautiful and costly gift, chosen with exquisite care, would be lying by her plate on Christmas morning. No, he was n't forget-

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ful, nor neglectful, any more than she herself; he was only—too busy.

It was quite half-past seven when she reached the Little Brown House on Christmas Eve. When she opened the door she knew that Christmas itself had arrived before her; for the house was alive with young children, as all self-respecting houses would be if they had the chance. You heard the children's shouts, and their mothers' worried admonitions, and Anne's cheerful, "There, there, let 'em be! It 's Christmas Eve, an' Christmas Eve 's children's eve. Ay, my dearies, laugh, do! An' when Miss Barbara comes we 'll open that settin'-room door; an' then you 'll see what you 'll see—bless you!"

"Miss Barbara" came in to be swallowed in a warm sea of joyous welcomings. She wore what she considered a plain dress; but the Mother of Six, and the women with her, looked upon its lustrous folds almost with

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awe; only the baby disregarded it, and sat upon it, and kicked his feet against it unconcernedly.

The sitting-room door had been opened; they were in the midst of gift-giving, and receiving, and exclamations when the door-bell rang.

"That," said Anne, pausing, with the Baby's jumping-jack in her hand, "will be that Westerner from 'round the corner. I 'll let him in, Miss Barbara; he 'll want to stay with the children here for a while, I know."

The senator's wife heard the front door open and close, and men's feet in the hall, and the Westerner saying in his pleasant out-of-doors voice full of the burr of R's:

"Here 's a bunch of real holly, and some real mistletoe to hang up; and here 's my oldest friend along with me—he 's an old friend of those kids, too. We 've brought you a few things to add to the tree for 'em. Say, now, it sure makes us two old chaps feel right good and Christmassy to get in

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here with you women and kids to-night!"

Anne and the Westerner came in together. The other man followed more slowly, looking about him with merry eyes. He was a very, very big man, and he seemed to fill the whole doorway in which he stood. Then the children saw him, and shouted rapturous welcomings; and he returned these with somewhat of a tender wistfulness in his smile.

From her sofa the senator's wife looked up; their eyes met, incredulously. She rose to her feet, putting down the baby.

But Anne had advanced to him, holding out a friendly hand.

"I know you 're the Big Man That Plays with the Children!" she said cordially. "I 'm sure glad to meet you at last, Neighbor; welcome, an' a Merry, Merry Christmas to you!"

He returned her greeting cordially; then the senator's wife came forward. Her eyes were large.

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"You!" said she faintly. "You—neighbor—playing with children. You here!"

"You!" said the senator. "Here to-night—why, Barbara, my dear!"

"I come—when I can find time—Anne keeps house—" she began.

He nodded. "I go around to Jack's—when I can find time. One 's got to have a few friends one can visit, don't you think?"

The baby set up a great wail, because he was a baby, and he had had enough of presents, and play, and grown-ups; and he wanted to go home and be put to bed. The Mother of Six picked him up, and her friends gathered the rest of the brood and their belongings together and carried them off, with many Christmas wishes tossed back and forth.

Anne beckoned the Westerner into the dining-room and pointed to the table.

"No real gentlemen," said she, "will refuse to fall to an' help eat up a lady's pie

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that she 's made with her own hands for Christmas."

"I am," said the Westerner, "a long-fanged wolf on pie. An' if you 'll cut yours in just halves, I 'll be everlasting grateful to you, ma'am." And he sat down, turning his back upon the sitting-room door.

The senator and his wife came to each other slowly, he looking down upon her whimsically, she looking up at him with eyes of pure wonder.

"Why, Barbie, is there ever any reading a woman? I 'd never guess that you 'd come visiting a little house like this—"

"This little house," said she, "is mine: I bought it. I 've wanted just this little house all my life, and I was n't honest or brave enough to tell you so."

"I thought," said the senator, "that it was the other sort of house you wanted, Barbie. That 's why I built it—for you."

"I did want it and I do want it—for you," said his wife. "That 's why I let you build

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it. But I want this for *me*—to get rested in, to be folksy in."

A slow twinkle grew in the senator's eyes.

"Barbara," he said, "you ought to see Jack's house, around the corner! A mighty nice little house. I've been going there for a long time. Did n't you ever guess I might like to be just folksy too, Barbie? There 's no tiresome bunch of servants tagging at your heels at Jack's. You can sit down in your shirt-sleeves and smoke a cuddy, if you want to; you can wait on yourself without shame and reproach—think of that! Do you know what Jack had for supper to-night? Fish-chowder, and pan-bread, and coffee that 'd make your hair curl! Gee, it was good!

"You see," he went on thoughtfully, nodding his head, "I like to go to Jack's because I get rested there—he 's a man. I can quarrel with him, even! Now you know I've loved you, and you alone, all my life, Barbie; it 's for you I wanted—the top-

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notch. But I—get tired at times. I want to loaf a little, and be folksy too. And you, Barbie—you?"

"I also," said the senator's wife with a girl's laugh. She put her arms about his neck and clung to him. "Oh, Hugh, my dear, don't you see, we've come together again! Hugh, we've come together, close! It wasn't the big house, nor the too-much-ness: it was that we didn't know, Hugh, and we couldn't take time to find out! All these years—and I didn't know the real You until to-night; all these years, and you had to stumble by chance into the Little Brown House, on Christmas Eve, and find the real me."

He kissed her with a young delight that shook his years from him, and straightened his shoulders, and kindled his face; so, for a while, they held each other.

"I wonder," he said presently—"Barbie, I wonder if you or any other woman can keep a secret?"

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She waved her hand about the room by way of reply.

"Why, of course you can, all of you!" said the senator. "There 's no end to the wonder of women! Well, now, Barbie, here 's the secret: I 'm to take a two weeks' rest after New Year's, and dodge everybody. I 'd thought of running out West—but, say, let 's just come right here to this little house of yours, and get acquainted all over again, Barbie. I feel as if I did n't half know you, anyhow. Will you come, dearest dear?"

"I 'll come," she said with shining eyes. "Hugh, Hugh, I 'm beginning to fall in love with you all over again—and I fifty-seven and a grandmother!"

The senator took out his watch. "There 's the girl's reception, Barbie—we 've got to fly," he said regretfully. "Is the car to come for you?"

"Oh, let 's tell Anne to send it back, and we 'll walk home,—as we used to—remember?—when a callow fledgling of a country

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lawyer courted and married a penniless district school-teacher?"

He nodded, wrapping her carefully in her sables. Anne and the Westerner asked no questions, expressed no surprise, made no comments: they were just such friends as that! They shook hands with a warm and loving pressure, and wished a million Merry Christmases with all their heart. And the Little Brown House breathed after them a message of peace and of understanding; and overhead the sky was thick with stars—one, larger and brighter than the others, dominating a great clear space.

They walked along together, hand in hand. The great holiday crowd jostled them, and they, being afoot, knew themselves a part of it and caught its spirit, and were glad. After a while the senator glanced up and called her attention to the biggest star.

"The same old star!" said he softly.

"And we together under it!" she answered happily.

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"Why come to think of it, so is everybody else!" said the senator with a hint of reverence.

"So is everybody else!" she repeated. "And that," she added, "is just what makes Christmas *Christmas!*"

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"THAT MAKES THE WORLD GO 'ROUND"

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"THAT MAKES THE WORLD GO 'ROUND"

IF I had n't loved Willy more than any girl had ever loved any man before, I should never, never, never have had the wild courage to marry him, on account of my mother; and if Willy had n't adored me to distraction, he would never, never, never have had the temerity to marry me, on account of his father. Not that there was anything in the least objectionable about Willy's father, or about my mother, who are about as dear, delightful angels as one shall find this side of Elysium. But—divided, they stood; united, they simply fell upon each other, tooth and claw!

When Willy passed the little millinery shop in West 127th Street, with the big "Valleau et Cie." above the door, and glanc-

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ing in saw the "Cie."—who was only little me—sitting with head bent over the bunch of red roses which was to adorn a stunning hat, he stopped dead short and stared with all his blue, honest, German eyes,—the very nicest eyes that ever were. And I looked up and stared back with my French black ones. From that moment neither of us had the faintest doubt but that the good God had meant us for each other. It was just like that! One minute before, and I had had no thought but of making a fine hat, and Willy had had no thought but of hurrying on to his luncheon; and the next moment the eternal, beautiful miracle had happened, snatching us out of everyday ordinary 127th Street and plumping us into Paradise, an Adam and Eve who did n't know each other's name.

After that my days were divided into the hours of waiting for a tall, fair young man to pass and fix me with his fine eyes, and the hours in which I reflected upon that glance.

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And then one day he marched in, very straightforward and serious, and told Maman and me who he was and all about himself, in a direct and manly way that won her respect at once. When we knew more of him Maman agreed that he was a very charming young man,—irreproachable, a desirable *parti* for a dowerless demoiselle like me. Only, in our dear, splendid America one does not have to have a *dot* to make a fine marriage.

When we were betrothed Willy had at once brought his father to see us. Willy looks up to his father as one does to Providence. He considers this old man with the big bald head and the white beard and the twinkling blue eyes quite perfect. When he says "My father" it is with an air of pride and affection that makes one's heart glow. One cannot but smile tenderly to see these two looking upon each other with such naïve delight, and to hear with what happiness this father says "My son."

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The old Herr Roeder is organist and choirmaster in the Lutheran Church, where Willy himself plays the violin and sings in a pleasing counter-tenor. Willy is a bank clerk, and as good an American as one shall find in a week's march. But his father is what Maman at once said was "effusively, emphatically, offensively Teutonic." Maman said that if Willy's father had been present upon the day when le bon Dieu finished making the heavens and the earth, he would have stamped upon both "*Made in Germany*"—as a guarantee of worth.

You see, Maman's father and grandfather had been Lorraine soldiers in 1870. Indeed, her grandfather had fallen fighting. And when Lorraine had been taken away from France, her father's French heart could n't beat happily under German rule. So presently he picked up himself and his motherless young daughter—who was Maman—and came over to New York. He was a mender and maker of clocks and watches,—

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a mild, amiable, fiery man with stooped shoulders upon which his white hair fell. I used to sit in his shop and hear his endless stories of bloody and bitter fighting in the streets and houses of Alsatian mountain towns, and of sorties and surprises and reprisals in the pleasant country of Lorraine. The big clocks upon the wall would go "tick, tick, tick," solemnly; and Maman would hold her sewing in her lap and murmur, "*Une crime! Une crime!*" remembering what her childish eyes had seen.

My dear gay artist father died when I was very little, and, like most artists, he left us nothing but his cherished memory. So Maman and I lived with my grandfather, and were very happy until he, too, died. Then Maman opened the millinery parlor in the shop where the clocks and watches used to tick. Although she is astonishingly clever and our shop had "Imported French Hats" on its sign, we did n't make much more than our living. But we were grateful and

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happy, putting our love of beauty and our joy in life and work into folds of ribbon and chiffon and clusters of flowers which were to make other women look pretty.

Maman is really more like a sister than a mother, she is so gay and charming. Her hair framing her rosy face is of that cottony, shining whiteness which is so rare and lovely, and her eyes are the brown, sparkling, animated eyes of a girl. She stands about five feet high in her shoes; and I am sure she would be enchanting and ensnaring if she lived to be a thousand, she has so much sheer power of personality. But—she is very temperamental. And she remembered cruel things she had seen and heard, even as Willy's father remembered. Although Willy's lovableness had disarmed her, and she loved him, Maman simply detested Germans in general. And although Herr Roeder had at once taken me into his big, warm, kind heart, he loathed French people as a rule. Maman shrugged her shoulders, and

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Willy's father wrinkled his nose. One would n't dream what immense and baleful powers of insult lie in shoulder and nose, until they had witnessed a performance by Maman and Willy's father. They disliked and distrusted each other with a fire and fury which threatened to consume our happiness. I think Maman was jealous that I should care so much for Willy's father, too; and Willy's father disliked the thought that his son should so greatly admire my charming Maman.

I shall never forget the night Willy made in their rooms a little feast in honor of our betrothal. Maman was silent and depressed. She would have been perfectly horrified at the bare thought of my remaining unmarried, but she was averse to having me go out of her life just yet and into Willy's—and his father's.

Her eyes, roving critically about the stiff, bare, clean dining-room, met of a sudden the insulting stare of Prince Bismarck, looking

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forbiddingly out of a big oak frame,—grim, military, formidable. She gave an involuntary shudder of distaste and aversion. But Willy's father, with a proud and sweeping gesture, and in a voice one might use to name Deity, said reverently:

"Bismarck!!"

"Brute!" said Maman. "Despoiler of France! Ah, mon Dieu! How I abhor that ill-favored visage of adamant!"

Herr Roeder stroked his beard tolerantly. "Ach, well!" he admitted soothingly, "one cannot blame you so greatly: he was one to trounce you thoroughly, the great Chancellor!"

I could almost see Maman's hair rise, and I trembled. Echoes of old songs, of old tales, firelighted memories, floated through my mind.

"I forgive him," said Maman, gently, "for the evils he helped to inflict upon my stricken country. Besides," she added piously, "one

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should even be sorry for him, now that he is undoubtedly in hell, thank God!"

It was turn for Willy's father's hair to rise, and I am sure that if he had had any it would have stood on end. Only, he is bald. His face grew purple, as if he were threatened with apoplexy.

"He is in the bosom of God!" he said with violence. "In hell! A man like that!"

"A man like that!" repeated Maman. "*Hein!*" and she and Herr Roeder locked eyes like horns.

"Madame!" stammered Willy, implor-ingly. "Dear Madame! Will you not—Madame, I beg of you to take a slice of seed-cake! Father, let me beg of you to offer our honored guest a slice of seed-cake. Do! It is such fine seed-cake!"

"Do, dear Maman!" I besought. She shrugged her shoulders, but a smile dimpled her lips and her eyes danced.

"Very well, my dears: I will have a slice

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of this fine seed-cake," she agreed. It was really very good indeed, and she said so, graciously.

"It is good German cake," said Willy's father, complacently. "For other peoples the messy cooking, yes; but for the good, plain, sensible, satisfying, body-building cooking, always it is the German which is the best. Ach! The gosling-stew of Germany! With dumplings!" He looked up at the ceiling ecstatically, as one who sees a beatific vision.

"Do not, I beseech you, forget the soup!" said Maman, gravely. "The fine water, with a thimble-ful of vegetable-parings floating upon the surface. Ah! The soup of Germany! Without seasoning!" She, too, looked up at the ceiling, with a droll naughtiness to make one giggle.

Willy had never been separated from his father, any more than I from Maman, and to break that tender intimacy, which a life-

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time's love and service had built up, seemed to us intolerable. We could not bear the thought of leaving them alone. We had, in truth, so much love that it spread out and embraced everything and everybody, and we thought that our parents' great affection for us would in time make them more tolerant of each other.

And so Willy and I were married, in St. Agatha's parsonage, with Maman and Herr Roeder looking on. Maman had made my frock herself, not allowing any one else to put a hand to it, and it was a dress to dream over and put away and cherish. When Father Bazin had read the service which united us, Willy's father put his arms around us both: he kissed Willy. "For your mother, my son, my dear, dear son!" said he, tenderly. "Ach! If she were only here to welcome our sweet new daughter! Always she longed for a daughter! But I will love you for myself and for her, too, my pretty Leon-

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tine!" He kissed me then, so fatherly that a great wave of affection flowed over my heart for him. But Maman only wept.

We all settled down together in a new bright apartment, up in the 120's. Maman had sublet the rooms over our shop, which she still retained; and as our new home was only a few blocks away from our old one, she was n't much inconvenienced going to and fro. It is true that the new rooms were small, and that Father's piano and music racks and arm-chair took up most of the sitting-room, just as Bismarck and Von Moltke took up most of the wall space in the dining-room, which they seemed to dominate. I was so glad to make Willy's father happy that I 'd have welcomed those pictures if both had been twins. It was delightful to me to see him at his piano, singing *lieder* sentimentally, or roaring out a drinking chorus at the top of his voice. He had, too, a pipe some two or three feet long, with a little ridiculous china bowl on the end of it,

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to which he was particularly devoted. Because I kept his jar full of his pet tobacco, and never meddled with his music, he praised me as an angel, pulling my ears, rumpling my hair, and kissing me smackingly on both my cheeks, while Willy looked on, pleased and happy.

But the pipe gave Maman a headache; she could n't, she said, abide the German fare I was learning to make, from Willy's mother's cherished recipe book, given me as a treasure upon a state occasion. She hated *lieder*. She said they were jellyfishy squishysquashy things, all sentiment and bereft of sense. She accepted the big pictures in the dining-room with a bad grace. She said their ungracious visages spoiled her appetite and gave her indigestion. And then she bought a fine new record of the "*Marseillaise*" for her victrola, as an offset to "*Die Wacht am Rhein*," which Father liked occasionally to sing in the evening, in a lusty voice that carried a full block.

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"Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein,
Fest steht und treu die Wacht, die Wacht am Rhein!"

shouted Father.

"Aux armes, citoyens! formez vos bataillons!
Marchons, marchons!
Qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons!"

shrieked the victrola belligerently, upon the heels of it.

That was the real beginning of overt and covert hostilities. Father felt himself affronted upon his most vulnerable points—his music and his affections. The most jovial and kindly of men, he could n't forgive that; he brought heavy artillery to bear upon his nimble antagonist, who skirmished lightly about and around him, attacking him upon all sides at once, until he was forced to retreat in raging disorder. Willy and I had to stand by, distressed and helpless.

"If only my mother would even try to appreciate your father!" I wept upon Willy's shoulder.

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"If only my father would be his true agreeable self to your mother!" Willy lamented to me. We were both exquisitely unhappy, because there lowered above the little home a heavy storm-cloud, liable at any moment to burst forth into thunders and lightnings of wrathful remarks and exploding retorts discourteous. If Willy had been less angelic, he would have been horribly cross; but he was strong and good enough to be patient as Job and meek as Moses.

"We will bear with them both," I told Willy. "It may be that some day you or I may be alone, like them, in a child's house, and we shall need love and patience then, too, my dearest. So let us now give both to these two people who are so dear to us."

I am sure we tried to. But Maman complained bitterly and with tears that I loved "that ruffianly old German" better than I loved her; and Father said Willy had forgotten his own sainted mother and loved in her stead a saucy French jade knee-high to a

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duck and with the temper to shame the devil's mother-in-law.

Willy and I were caught between the upper and the nether millstones. It was n't that they did n't love us; they did, passionately. I am sure Father would have died for me, a thousand times; I am sure Maman loved Willy as her own son. She said his mother had evidently been an angel, as, despite his horrible old father, she had been able to endow him with her perfect disposition. And when I at first ventured to speak up timidly in behalf of the hot-tempered, kind-hearted old man, Maman made a thin red line of her pretty mouth, shrugged her shoulders up to her ears, flashed at me a glance of flaming disdain, and marched off to her own room, locking me out.

"I have but one favor, one last favor, to ask of you, my child," she said, before shutting the door upon me. "Let me be dead before you give to me grandchildren that re-

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semble little dressed Christmas pigs—and named Karl Johann. I could not support that indignity."

I went back to the kitchen to look after the pot-roast with herbs which simmered upon the back of the range, and I reflected sorrowfully that we should have all been so much happier for only a little reasonable kindness! I suppose I cried a little over the stove about the Christmas pigs named Karl Johann. Oh, Maman, how could you! I said not a word to Willy, however; and when Maman would n't come to table, complaining that she simply could n't endure the fumes of Father's pipe to-night, Willy himself carried her in a tray, with a rose laid upon it which he had brought home. She thanked him somewhat shamefacedly.

"Willy," said she, "I 'm very, very glad my child had the good sense to love you and the good fortune to marry you. And I 'm still gladder, Willy, that it is I, and not the

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good little Leontine who has the bad, bad, bad temper." She kissed him and gently pushed him out of the room.

"Ah!" said Willy to me, regretfully, "such a kind heart, with so much love! If only we could make her happy!" I am sure my own heart crowded up into my eyes then to look out at Willy; and I dropped the basting-spoon and flung my arms around him in a passion of gratitude. Willy held me for a long minute.

"So!" said Father, entering on tiptoes, and putting his arms about us both. "So! Son! Daughter. I—" His voice broke. He kissed us quickly and ran out.

I think they honestly tried to avoid quarrels; but they possessed to an unusual degree the power of arousing each other's antagonism and anger; and so they did little else than quarrel. Maman's merry chatter, her lighthearted insouciance, left her. She wore a dissatisfied face, and she took to staying longer at the shop, coming home I hate

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to think how unwillingly. Father's loud laughter was a thing of the past; he looked bewildered, as one who expects and dreads rebuffs. He no longer roared out drinking-songs, and the piano was too often closed.

I had taken a severe cold and had to remain in bed, and so Maman left the shop in charge of her assistant and remained at home with me. I required very little attention; and she took this opportunity to give our apartment a particularly thorough cleaning, which, indeed, it did n't need. But Maman had the French passion for dustlessness.

She really does n't make the nerve-racking uproar most superclean people raise when they clean and polish and shine what is already clean and polished and shining. Not she! In cap and dust-apron she whisks from one thing to another, giving everything an extra touch; and the light sound of her little feet is pleasant to hear, as a child's footsteps about one's house. So I lay back in satisfied

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half-consciousness, until she came to the dining-room. When she was polishing Bismarck's picture she broke into irrepressible speech:

"*Ja! Ach! Ich! So! Gewiss!*" she mocked, in an irresistibly funny imitation. "*Kolossal!*" Then: "Iron-faced animal!" said she, viciously. "Cruel, cold, arrogant Prussian! It is your overbearing spirit which animates this unhappy house and blights my one child's affection for me!" The cake of scouring-soap came down with a resounding crack, followed by a still more ominous crack. Maman had brought more force to bear than she intended, and the cake went right through the glass and came down on the Chancellor's broad nose. Maman gave a little scream, and just at that inopportune moment Father stalked in.

"Infamous!" he roared. "Miserable Frenchwoman! You should be locked up in jail for such an outrage!" He stamped with his feet so violently that the broken

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glass fell out of the frame with a loud shivering crash. Maman jumped aside.

"Assassin!" said she, passionately. "Do you deliberately try to murder me? Ah! You would like to, brute of a German!"

"Little anarchist! To wreck my picture —my fine, noble picture!" stormed Father. "It is dastardly!"

"I did not deliberately break it; it was an accident—"

"To drive her revengeful fist upon his honored countenance!" gritted Father. "Demoniac!"

"Beast!" hissed Maman, quivering with rage. "Is it not enough for you to steal from me my only child's affection but you must also insult me with brutal doubts upon my truthfulness, and then try to murder me with broken glass?"

"Horrible woman! You estrange from me my son, my only son, prevent your daughter from loving me, wreck my home and my

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peace of mind, and then smash my beautiful picture!"

"Oh! This German is insufferable!" exclaimed Maman, in a suffocating voice. "Frightful old man! It is you, you, who blight this house!"

"Madame! I love my children. You, Madame, love nothing but your own way. You have the devil's own temper, Madame. It is you, you, who make us all wretched."

I got out of bed then, and in my dressing-gown, trembling, sick at heart, came and stood between them.

"Father! Maman! Allow me to love you both without making you and Willy and myself frightfully unhappy. Ah! You are killing me!" I sank into a chair and wept uncontrollably. They watched me in stricken silence.

"Monsieur," said Maman in a subdued voice, after a long and painful pause, "it is not you, not I alone, but both of us, who make our beloved children weep. We must

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"Such scenes shall not be repeated"

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remedy this." She patted me on the shoulder and then assisted me to rise. "Calm yourself before Willy comes home and is troubled, my child," said she quietly, though she was very pale. "There! Go back to bed. Such scenes as this shall not be repeated, I promise you."

I went over to Father, who had sunk dejectedly into a chair, with his arms hanging down lifelessly, and kissed him timidly upon the cheek. He looked at me unhappily, but said not a word. *Ah, le bon Dieu!* Why do we make one another thus miserable, when at the best and longest we have such a little, little while to stay!

That night, when Father had gone out, Maman came into my room, where Willy was sitting beside my bed.

"My children, I have a thing to say to you," she said seriously. "I am going to leave your house. No! Do not protest. Do not do me or yourselves the injury to wish me to remain. My mind is made up, irre-

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vocably. You know the tenants of my flat above the shop are leaving the city. I shall at once move back into my own house, which I should never have left. It was a grievous thing for me to come to you, my dears, for no one should be a useless fifth wheel upon another's domestic coach. You should have your chance to be happy—alone. Forgive me, forgive me, for having made you unhappy! You see, Leontine is my only child, and her father—" She turned her head aside for a moment. But Willy leaned over and took her hand, consolingly.

"You are quite right, little Mother," he said, truthfully. "It would be as great a wrong to you as to us to wish you to remain, when you are not happy with us. But do you realize why you are unhappy here, Mamanchen? It is because you are too young and too pretty to play second fiddle in anybody else's house, even Leontine's."

Maman laughed through her tears.

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"Willy!" she cried, "you might have been a Frenchman!"

When Father was told, he nodded his head. "I, too, go," he said bluntly. "She is right for once, that odious woman. For there is no room in the new nest for the old birds; they crowd the youngsters, and for themselves they make starvation. Sing and fly by yourselves, my children. That will make me happy. Only—do not fly too far away from thy old father, Willy!"

So Maman went back to the rooms over the shop and was too busy to allow herself to be unhappy, even if she were inclined to be; and Father took two pleasant rooms near us, and went right on with his music lessons. Maman was to come on Tuesdays and Fridays, and Father on Mondays and Thursdays, with an alternate Sunday for each; thus they would escape the unpleasantness of meeting each other in our house.

It was pleasant to have such a darling little place as Maman's flat to visit. Now

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that she was alone she gave full rein to her own individual taste, and never did any little place look daintier, more homelike and simple and charming than Maman's rooms. And Maman herself! Under our astonished and delighted eyes Maman grew younger. She arranged her thick white hair ravishingly, with fleecy curls about the ears; she manufactured for herself enchanting little hats with hints of lilac in them, and she evolved frocks of a chic to make one gasp. She was witty as only a Frenchwoman can be; she was pretty as only an American is. Then she began to skip her evenings with us; she began to visit us, not as a pleasure only to herself, but as a pleasure and a privilege to us.

As for Father, the change in him was of a longer growth, but it was none the less certain and sure. He began to do without us. He looked brushed and groomed and well-fed and prosperous and jovial. He developed a taste in ties that made us marvel.

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His ragged beard had been Vandyked into a trimness which clipped ten years off his age, and his clothes were modern and dignified.

It was our turn now to suffer a little wholesome neglect, for our parents *were* neglecting us. They were seeking—and, what is more, finding—other objects of absorbing interest outside of our dear selves that loved them so much; they were living their own lives in their own fashion, without so much as a by-your-leave from either of us.

When our dear adored baby was born they behaved as distractedly as any well-brought-up grandparents could, however. They were extravagantly delighted. Never was there so exquisite a baby! Maman said that I had been an adorable baby myself, but that I simply was n't to be compared with *this* angel. Father remembered that Willy had been a very nice baby, too, but not to compare to our baby, who, judging from the

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magnificent formation of his head, would undoubtedly grow up to be a statesman. Poor, dear, red, wrinkled little statesman, with no language at his command save a squeal, and never a hair to his precious head!

The baby had come to us at Thanksgiving —that good, beautiful American holiday of ours that I so greatly love—so it was almost Christmas before I was able to take him out, myself. Willy and I had decided that his first visit should be to his grandmother; we would take him to see her on Christmas Eve, all snugly wrapped up. And we would then go to Father on Christmas morning. It was to be a beautiful surprise.

To tell the truth, for the last week or ten days we had seen very little of Maman or of Father, either. They were so busy with their own affairs.

We knew that Maman had intended to dismiss her assistants early, close the shop, and spend Christmas Eve at home; she could afford to be so independent, for those

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charming hats of hers were beginning to sell for good prices. At dusk, then, we wrapped our little baby up snugly and tucked him among his carriage cushions, took our presents, and started out. We were both in a glow of pride and happiness when we reached Maman's. Her windows were lighted; so we knew she was at home.

She met us at the door with a cry of pleasure; then she ushered us into her living-room, calling in a gay, glad voice:

"See who 's here! See who 's here!"

A big man in a brand-new smoking-jacket got up out of the new Morris chair in which he had been making himself comfortable.

"Ha! Our children!" said Willy's father gayly, and fell upon us.

We could only gasp, and stare. The room was lovely with Christmas greens, and Maman herself was a vision in a red gown, with red satin slippers on her little feet and a vivid Poinsettia in her beautiful white hair. On a new mahogany stand was a

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powerful bust of—who but the Chancellor himself, a gay holly wreath adorning his beetling brows!

"Father!" gurgled Willy. "Maman!" I echoed weakly, and almost fell into a chair.

Willy's father shifted his small grandson very tenderly to his shoulder, and beckoned to Maman, who came and stood beside him, slipped her small hands about his big arm, and laughed at our bewilderment.

"My surprise for you, my children!" said she.

"It is like this," said Father, gravely. "I came one night to Madame, forced by loneliness and repentance, to beg her pardon for driving her out of her child's home. I found her sad and lonely, even as I was; but how good the little home she had made for herself looked to me, who had none! And we consoled each other. She loved my son and I adored her daughter, and thus we fell into kind talk and discovered that each was better than the other had thought. And how

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heavenly a meal she set before me, seasoned with such wit! It is true that there are no cooks and no wits on earth like the French!

"Afterward I came again—and yet again. And we discovered that we were not so very old—not too old to be young—and that there was much, very much, in life, for both of us. We decided to share, to help each other. I taught her much of German, she explained to me much of French, and the great immortal ones of our countries healed us with their divine art."

He paused to rub his cheek softly against the baby's bald head. "Ach! She is a wonderful woman—wonderful!" he said, with a vast pride. "Dear little child, if thou wilt but take after thy wise, beautiful, witty, perfect, ever-to-be-adored grandmother, thou wilt be the greatest of men!" he told the baby.

Maman laughed like a girl. "What I most admire about the best Germans," she said thoughtfully, "is their fine domestic

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sentiment. They have such tender hearts, which they are at times wise enough to show. Ah, Willy, how I rejoice, for my dear child's sake, that you so greatly resemble your good father!"

"And so," continued Father, comfortably, "our love for our children having made us hate each other, their love for each other and for us made us love each other. I found I was unhappy away from Madame. Madame discovered that she was happy only in my company. Do you think the young alone are capable of love? No, no! While there is life there is love. So Madame and I propose to make for ourselves a home, a fireside, where we shall sit, loving each other and our children, until our good Herr Gott removes us to a better Home. Your mother, Leontine," he added to me, "is a remarkable woman, a perfectly marvelous woman! Wonderful, my child, wonderful! It is not to be told how I adore this angel of a woman!"

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"You are going to be married?" Willy's voice was all but hysterical.

"We were married," said Maman calmly, "three days ago. Your father," she told Willy, "is a very masterful man. He would have it so, without fuss and without explanations; and I was glad to please him."

Father pointed to the holly-wreathed bust.

"My dear wife's first Christmas present to me!" he said happily.

"Yes," said Maman, with unabashed serenity, "Johann has labored to explain his real character to me. Johann loves and respects him, so there must be something to be said for the man, although I of course deplore the fact that he thought he had to be harsh to my dear country. But we are both good Americans. *This* is our country. Remembering that, why should we waste our time quarreling about foreign statesmen?"

"Now you shall hear *my* little gift to my dear wife," said Father, proudly. Still holding the baby, who seemed perfectly con-

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tent to snuggle on his shoulder, he marched over to a magnificent graphanola and slipped in a fine new record. Under the Chancellor's mighty nose rose the soul-stirring, martial magic of the "Marseillaise." We listened with delight, until it ceased. Then Maman, with a glance of affection and gratitude at Father, put in another record. Flooding the little Christmas-decked room came a beautiful blending of men's and women's and children's voices, singing the old, old, lovely, holy Christmas hymn.

"Oh, come ye, oh, come ye, to Bethlehem!"

We all drew closer together, feeling our hearts in unison; and remembering the Holiest Baby of all, we looked down upon our own little baby very tenderly.

"My dearest children," said Maman, with her hands clasped around Father's arm, "I have to beg of you a favor, a great favor: for my best Christmas gift, promise me to name my little adored grandson Karl Johann!"

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